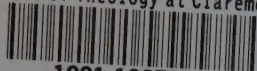


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THE INWARD VISION

By

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*“ Faith, our Outward Sense befriending,
Makes the Inward Vision clear.”*

ONE may hold a truth yet without inwardly possessing it. The formula which we accept will lie sterile in our minds if we do nothing to apply it to the reality which it is intended to serve. To see through a symbol is not to abolish it, rather it is to give it greater significance: for a symbol is nothing in itself but only something in that for which it stands. To use symbols aright means, precisely, to let them point us to that for which they stand: yet it is not given to us now to know things as they really are, but only with difficulty to see them as through a glass darkly. If we remember this, then the very darkness becomes a spring of illumination: for the Outward Sense will be content to rest there while the Inward Vision, lighted by faith, travels beyond the range of discursive reason into a dimension of new values and new understanding, though it has no other medium of report than the analogies from which it started. To these, then, it must return, and thereafter give thanks to God in silence.

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DEUS ABSCONDITUS

THAT God is a Hidden God, that His action no less than His essence must always remain hidden from us and be intelligible only so far as analogy can afford us a working knowledge of them, is true; for His mode of being, His self-existence, has no parallel in the created order—the only order of which we can have direct cognizance—and we are incapable of finding a place in our minds for such an idea as that: just as, for instance, an inhabitant of a world of two dimensions would be incapable of finding terms in which to describe one of three. We simply cannot imagine an existence without a beginning, a present without a past or a future, action without change, distinction without difference. We say, and believe, that God exists of Himself: that He is absolutely simple: that with Him (like Himself) everything just *is*—not “was” nor “will be”—and we are perfectly well aware that while we must isolate His attributes in order to suit them to our own understanding, we are cutting away their real significance by doing so. Yet it is not true that God remains in consequence unknown to us or necessarily hidden

from our sight. Unknown, yes, if knowledge of a thing must exhaust objectively all the content of it, but not if it means (as it does) that the subject receives as much of the object as becomes its own nature. In this sense we may say that a dog knows its master completely even though it does not, and never can, know that he is, for instance, a poet or a mathematician. Similarly, according to our own nature and in the only way in which such knowledge can fit and benefit us in this life, we may say that we can have a complete knowledge of God. He is a hidden God as to Himself but not as to ourselves. So little hidden is He, indeed, that the wonder should be not that we see Him but that we do not see Him, for there is in the whole of nature not a single created thing which is not, and is not meant to be, first and foremost, a revelation of Him. And this not merely by process of argument and deduction such as befits, perhaps, only the relatively few who are capable of abstract thought and inference, but plainly and in such manner as can hardly be missed by anyone: "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power, also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable, because that when they knew

DEUS ABSCONDITUS

God they have not glorified Him as God or given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts and their foolish heart was darkened.”

In every one of His created works God repeats and reveals Himself, now as to one aspect of Himself now as to another, and we are inexcusable who do not recognize Him in them.

The ocean, for example, suggests to us at once unfathomable depth, incalculable mass, unresting movement, resistless power, endlessness—for how are we to say where the waters of the sea begin and where they end? Well, we should see that the first meaning of the ocean, the most substantial and the most important for us, is that it translates into a physical image the infinite profundity and immensity, the unceasing act, the omnipotence and the eternity of God. We may count all other significances as secondary, almost as accidental.

A river, again, is a thing which, though it is always the same, is yet always different, for not a drop of it passes the same point twice. It moves on forever and forever remains where it is: and whatever obstacles, natural or designed, may be in its way, it wins in spite of them, inevitably, in the end, to the sea to which it flowed from the beginning. As a single whole it reaches the sea

and travels to the sea at one and the same time. And here, once more, what the river should be to us first of all is a picture in another medium of God, moving on, yet without moving, to the end in which from all eternity He has rested: His Will, in spite of all that seems to us to contradict and oppose and frustrate it here in time and in our world, fulfilled down to the least particular from all eternity "on earth as it is in heaven."

Or a mountain. Humbling us yet lifting our thoughts up from the level on which we must pass our lives: not to be climbed without effort and preparation yet repaying us at every step with wider views and new visions and a purer air: and if we have to descend afterwards to the dull and unavoidable round of daily duty, remaining still in our sight as a symbol of the better and nobler things of life and of all that is unchangeable and immovable and secure. Once more, it is the "desire of the eternal hills" that should raise our thoughts to the God to Whom we must, as a condition of life, look up as the flower must look up to the sun: He who remains unchanged towards us however we change towards Him, even (mysteriously) if we choose finally to turn away from Him altogether: the one point of permanence in our lives, "Thou art always

DEUS ABSCONDITUS

the selfsame, and Thy years shall not pass": in Whose company, when we withdraw ourselves thither, all things are made new, and we are refreshed and see and know and consider and understand and come back each time stronger and bigger and more humble.

And so through all nature from great things like the sea and the hills to little ones like the flowers and the birds and the grass, the Divine Signature—indeed, His very face and form—is not to be mistaken: "I am that am," the Beginning and the End, the All from Whom instant by instant we take the ever-new gift of our being in Whom we live and move and are.

He, hide Himself from us! No, but He hides everything else from us in Himself.

THE IMAGE AND THE TRUTH

“**N**O man hath seen God at any time,” says St John. The best conception that we can form of Him is by figure and similitude, by analogies drawn from our experience of finite things. We *must* think of Him man-wise, because in this life we have no higher category into which to fit Him: and with all our reservations and allowances the best that we can make of Him in the end is a human being sublimated, if you like, beyond all actual or possible experience, but still characteristically human like ourselves.

This means that we shall always be in doubt and obscurity about such questions as His Will; His treatment of ourselves; sin and punishment; Heaven, Hell and Purgatory; prayer, grace, and vocation. His ways will seem to contradict, or at least incomprehensibly to transcend, those primal principles of justice and charity which we take, and *must* take, as absolute and unquestionable for ourselves: and we can only accept the paradoxes and the anomalies which bewilder our intellects by the laborious exercise of a faith as

paradoxical and as anomalous as they. God is God, we say: so be it: He is right: but were a man to use his power on the world as He seems to use it, how should we excuse him?

These are the straits in which sin has left us—the original sin which hangs like a curtain between God and us: the sin because of which we come into the world strangers to God, short, as it were, of a dimension. And in such straits, but for Christ, we should remain: for in Him, the Word, the Self-utterance of God, we can now see (not exhaustively, for that were impossible to us as yet, but sufficiently to quicken and, so to speak, to materialize our faith) what indeed God is.

As far as God can be translated into humanity and be explained to minds such as ours, as far as His self-existence can be rendered into terms of created life, as far as Omnipotence itself can bridge the incommensurable, so far has Christ “revealed the Father,” explained Him to us, lived Him before us, brought Him down to us and us up to Him.

Who sees Him and hears Him and knows Him, sees and hears and knows, so far, the Father from Whom He came. We could not otherwise have imagined it, but now in Christ we can truly know, and because of Christ legitimately treat with, God as a personality and a human

THE IMAGE AND THE TRUTH

personality, really, actually, no longer by strained example and analogy as between nature and nature, but fairly as such, for Christ has in Himself bound into one Person the natures of us both.

Yet, even so, Christ would not have us rest finally in Himself. He is the *way* not the *end*: He would not have us stop, as at our term, at what He has done for us, at His revelation of the Father in Himself: but rather that through this, because of this, by means of this, we should come at last *with* Him to that which is after all Himself. What He is to us now is the uttermost point of achievement in that spiritual development which prepares us, at the last, for the day when, face to face, we "shall know even as we are known."

PRESENCE AND POWER

ALL writers on the subject, however variously they may express themselves, agree that the elemental fact of the mystical life is that the Presence of God is known and possessed with a final certitude which no depth of faith or intensity of sense-perception could produce. This knowledge is knowledge in a new mode which only the action of the Holy Ghost can effect. All similes fall, and must fall, short of exactness in describing this unique manner of knowing which is invulnerable to every attack of doubt on no matter what grounds. Only God, Who alone can act directly without any intermediary instrument upon our souls, can give us this supra-intellectual, supra-sensible, certainty of His Presence: no one else, therefore, can describe it: and those mystical writers whom we know to be the most highly qualified for the task of description by their own intimate experience fail, and confess that they must always fail, to put their knowledge of it unequivocally into words. Saint Teresa perhaps comes nearest when she calls it a "touch" or a "taste" of God: but even these expressions will lead us astray if we examine them too narrowly.

THE INWARD VISION

In short, to fit this "knowledge" of God's Presence into any of the categories of knowledge which come within our daily experience is to make of it something that it is not, and to remove it proportionately farther from the reach of our comprehension.

What is true of this mystical knowledge is true, in a certain measure and in a parallel way, of the non-mystical knowledge of God's Presence which we all have by faith. If this knowledge is to be an actuating, governing element of our lives it too must be disentangled from certain prejudices and prepossessions. We must give up, for instance, all thought of a local presence: all idea of God observing or acting upon us from a distance: all imagination of His watching, planning, testing or manœuvring us: all concepts, in a word, of His Presence which bring it into line with the circumscribed modes of our own experience.

Is this possible? Can we so free our minds from the limits of sense as to make a positive reality for ourselves of a thing which we cannot even imagine except as the culmination of a process of negations?

The answer must be, no: but what is true is that we *can* find a statement of this Presence which will serve as a perfectly satisfactory formula for what we mean, even while we admit its

PRESENCE AND POWER

ultimate inadequacy. Let it be a rule of thumb: a principle, rough enough in itself but pointing in the right direction.

Look upon the Presence of God, then, as a *force* pressing upon us unremittingly, not from outside inwards only, but from inside outwards too: a force which no atom of our being can elude: a force whose pressure is a necessary condition of our existence: a force moreover, and especially, which penetrates to the inmost of our moral and spiritual consciousness, subjecting them to constant and intimate contact with the Ideal for which we were created.

This means that, day in day out, all the length of our conscious life, God for Whom we were made, in Whom alone we can find what we want and understand what we mean, presents Himself to the apprehension of our soul, tempts our desire, pursues our will. To this pressure we *must* react, either with it or against it.

But it will not do to keep this formula for the region of speculation alone. It is I myself that is concerned; I am as definitely and individually the object of this force as though there were in all the world no other creature than I. I, who am self-forming, may build in this shape or in that: the pressure, always the same, adapts itself to each—the same law, the same light, the same

THE INWARD VISION

love—not compelling my assent, indeed, yet following me with undiminished instance upon my furthest wanderings and moulding itself into my worst sins, pressing even these into the service of my sanctification.

This it is which has given to many, on looking back over their past lives, a strange—almost uneasy—awareness of some hidden Power, which, in spite of all their consciousness of free election, has seemed somehow to have been leading or driving them, without their knowledge, and has in the end made unison and harmony out of so much wilful incoherence and discord—suffering that has somehow come now to be understood as happiness, failure that is seen now to have been fulfilment, evil that has turned to good.

It is only in such vivid moments of reflective insight that one recognizes the Divine Force upon one's soul of which else one were as little conscious as of the atmospheric weight upon one's body, and that one traces to its true source, in the recognition, that ceaseless call to the better thing—the nobler and finer and higher thing—now clear and imperious, now dimmer and less urgent, often disquieting and a pain, but never quite still.

The best that is in us responds to it, and may God in His mercy judge us by that.

EMMANUEL

A SENSE of the presence of God (using "sense" in the loosest possible way) is the most essential ingredient of the Interior Life. But here, as in every particular of that life, if there be anything unreal or make-believe the result is not only useless but often positively harmful. The occasional surprising lapses of certain reputedly "pious" persons are probably due to the existence of some consciously artificial element in their "piety," on account of which the whole edifice stood in a state of unstable equilibrium.

It is important, therefore, that in so vital a matter there should be no such germ of weakness. The fact of the presence of God, the stark truth and reality of the fact, should, without any call upon the imagination, be the sole basis of our adherence to it. There is no need for a corporeal image or any sort of materialization of this concept: these would loosen rather than tighten our grasp of it: the presence of God is presence in a fuller meaning than that of any of the objects of sense or imagination of which we can be aware. Just because He *is* God, unique in His order of being, absolute, self-existent, unlimited, His

presence, too, is unique, unconditioned, complete. Though in our own order it is meaningless to speak of "degrees" of presence (as if a thing, while it is wholly in a given place, can be more there or less there), yet it is not beyond our intellects to admit, even if we do not understand, that there *is* a mode of presence more exhaustive, as it were, than that of our normal existence.

God, therefore, is present to me, interwoven with me, entangled in me, pervading me, consciously, deliberately, actively. I can know this even if I cannot imagine it: indeed, I know it the better just because I cannot imagine it, because I can imagine it only at the cost of distorting it: it becomes diffracted in the medium of my mind.

But we can bring this tremendous truth home to ourselves in another way. In Christ, God is incarnate. In Him, God and man are one. Here are a human body and a human soul in one indivisible person who is God. In Jesus of Nazareth a distinct human nature and a distinct divine nature are identified (the word will serve) in one responsible person. Because of Him, therefore, God is forever man in all men—not, of course, in a hypostatic union, but yet in a personal alliance which had not existed but for Him. Because of Him the divine and the human are in each of us wedded in an association almost of personality

and responsibility. The presence of God might, without Him, be conceived mechanically as an indefeasible sequence of the divine attributes: with Him, and because of the union in Him of God with this particular Man, there enters into our conception of the union of God with each and all men an element of personal activity of which we could otherwise have had no idea.

It is impossible to express this in language which does not lay itself open to misconstruction. In this matter, as always when there is question of the divine nature, words can never be more than wavering shadows of the reality which they would suggest.

It is enough (because it is the utmost that we can do) to know that God is with us by presence and by power in unimaginable intimacy, in all our activities, in every detail of our being: and this knowledge is life.

THE LOVE OF GOD

THE love of God is not a thing to be measured by emotion, unless perhaps in an inverse sense, for it is of the essence of love to be selfless, and emotion is referable almost wholly to one's self. This may seem to be a hard saying, removing the love of God to a rarefied region of mystery into which it can scarcely be pursued by ordinary humanity. If the love of God, it will be argued, really is love as we understand the word among ourselves (and if it is not, let us give it some other more fitting name), then it must be very largely emotional, otherwise it is unimaginable.

The fallacy here lies precisely in this, that while it is perfectly true that the love of God is of the same nature as love of a fellow-creature, the resemblance is between it and creature-love in its reality, not as this commonly manifests itself. Emotion is properly the *outcome* of love, following it so regularly and so immediately as easily to be mistaken for its very self: but logically it is a sequence only; it is, so to say, what I get out of it, not the thing itself. The test is whether when emotion dies away so does the love from

which it sprang, for then what has gone is shown to be not love after all, since love is immortal and changes only to grow. That we *can* love is the most authentic revelation of the Divine element in our nature, the nearest thing to eternity that is in us, the readiest proof that we are made in the image and likeness of God. That amongst ourselves love and emotion are inextricably bound together is a reminder of how imperfect that image and likeness yet is. For the essence of love is an appreciation of the goodness of the person loved, so great, that we desire to surrender the whole of ourselves to him, keeping nothing back and asking nothing in return: and in proportion to the deliberateness of this act will be the degree of its perfection, to which nothing of value is added by the emotional reactions which are beyond our control. To be 'carried away' by the attraction of a person or thing may have no more volitional significance and therefore no more moral, much less spiritual, importance than to be sensible of warmth or light. To love, in brief, is to want to give, and above all to give oneself: and perfect love is the perfect gift of oneself without thought of reward or return.

At the same time it will not do to reject emotion as invariably and essentially a hindrance. The

THE LOVE OF GOD

appreciation of goodness to which the will responds by its act of surrender will normally be accompanied by a conjugate stimulus to the affective emotions, and rightly and helpfully so. But as the will becomes "locked" to the object of its predilection more perfectly, and therefore more purely and selflessly, so will it have less need or room for support from any other source.

In order, then, to love God it is obviously a first condition that we should know Him: not with a speculative knowledge alone, which may indeed often be a positive hindrance, but with the inner, deeper knowledge which faith endlessly unfolds, from its first simple premise that "God is good"—good, how perfectly and in how many ways which yet are all but one way, and with what ever-new and ever-deeper significances and implications, *expertus potest credere*, says Saint Bernard.

This knowledge of God (quite distinct from knowledge *about* God) is possible, in an inchoate condition, as the result of our own efforts. That is, there is within the reach of our natural powers an appreciation of Him as *the* Good which demands, short of compelling it, a surrender of our will to Him in an increasing degree according as this appreciation becomes more absorbing. The chief instrument of this increase is prayer:

the prayer in which we balance and collate and consider what faith has to tell us about Him, at first with much activity of our reason and later in a simpler and more comprehensive beholding of what He is. Here reason supplies us with a certainty of His presence which, though still within the ambit of faith, is at least a predisposing condition, affording a kind of point of insertion for that possession of Him which is the only true knowledge and is His gratuitous gift and therefore of its nature unattainable by any exertion on our part. That this is entirely gratuitous, and therefore cannot be necessary to sanctification, is certain: that it will, all the same, be granted in aid of loyal and persevering effort after sanctification seems to be, practically and historically, almost as certain. Without it the will cleaves to God freely indeed, but still with a certain dependence upon the understanding, and therefore never in complete perfection: with it, though still free, the will goes out alone to its Object neither helped nor hindered by any reflection or debate. This is that mystical element which differentiates, as between one order of being and another, the loftiest prayer to which our own powers can lift us from that which, without any action of our own, is given us as an alms is given to a beggar: a knowledge of God, namely, which

THE LOVE OF GOD

seems to be God Himself, since it is He Himself realizing His presence in us.

But still love of God, all-embracing love—"with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind"—is a commandment: it must therefore be possible to us naturally and cannot be dependent upon an extraordinary and uncovenanted gift. And indeed, to the extent to which our heart and soul and mind can compass the excellence of God, the perfection of that love is open to the humblest of us all. My will does not go in advance of my mind: I love only what I know even if I do not know it entirely: the greatness of my love is measured by my apprehension of its object, and this may well be immeasurably greater than the power that I have to state it, even to myself. In this particular there are no distinctions, either natural or fortuitous, and only God knows why, as things are, it is so difficult to believe that there are not. But "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy," He says: and we never doubt that in the scheme of creation, which is the work from instant to instant of His will, there can be nothing out of balance or awry.

LOVE AND ANGER

IT is an ineluctable defect of our nature, a limitation from which in this life there is no escape, that we can say nothing of God which is not self-contradictory: nothing, that is, which, while it affirms a truth about Him, does not at the same time imply a falsehood. For we can use of Him only the same words, corresponding to the same ideas, that we use of ourselves: and these, however much we rarefy and dematerialize them, bring Him, after all, of necessity, into one category with ourselves. This is the falsehood: for there is nothing, no thinkable predicate, identically true of God and man.

We say, for instance, that God is just, and that there are men who are just. But it were truer to say that God is Justice, which cannot be said of men: of whom, therefore, when we say that they are just, we use the word very much as we do such epithets as "sweet" or "sharp" applied to sound, or expression, or temper. We quite know what we mean, but we do not (and cannot) quite mean what we say. Mostly there will not be, on this account, any practical interference

with our conceptions of God that need trouble us: but the disability does still cling about all our thoughts of Him and is, perhaps, responsible for many of the mistakes that so gravely affect our relations with Him.

The Anger of God, for instance.

My sin angers God: I incur His displeasure by it: I am taught to fear and avoid it on that account: and how easily do I therefore form of Him a conception only different in degree from that which I have of a fellow-being, who can be hurt, dishonoured, irritated by my words or actions, and who will avenge himself for them until he has righted the wrong that has been done him.

But how can God be hurt or dishonoured or irritated, and what can be taken from Him, or added to Him, even by Himself? And anyhow, even while I tremble at such an image of His wrath, do I not feel that He is somehow, obscurely, the *less* God just because I do so tremble, since it makes Him only by denomination, so to speak, different from, however bigger than, myself? And does that leave me with any God at all?

No: God is not angry. Let me, because I cannot help myself, call it anger: but let me, too, remember that that is not what it really

LOVE AND ANGER

is. It is, in fact, the very opposite of anger: it is love.

God has for me (perhaps I ought to say, *is* for me), from beginning to end, one thing—love, infinite love. Hell itself is the issue of love: for since our recoil from the hurt that another receives is in proportion to the love that we bear him, so that ultimate irremediable recoil (as it seems to us) of God from the lost soul is the measure of His love for that soul upon whom the mortal hurt of enmity to Himself has come. For my sin is no hurt to God but to myself: I have flung myself against a rock, and the cuts and the bruises (perhaps the death) are mine alone: not the rock has suffered, but I.

Yes, but *this* Rock, who has not hurt me but Whom I have used to hurt myself, is—angry? I may call it that as a rough symbol, the nearest thing if I judge by material appearances, but yet immeasurably far from the reality—*angry* with me, then, if I must call it so, not for the harm that my sin could never do Him but for the harm that it has done myself.

If I could see my soul under the impact of sin, reeling from the shock, blinded and bleeding, stunned and numbed!

And this, too, is love: my sin tells me the truth about itself: and I can truly call the pain of it

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God's pain, because somehow, equivalently, my quarrel with Him for Whom I was made is His quarrel with me Who made me for Himself: and therefore, too, God's love, because it was for love, each for the other, that He made me.

THE ALL

TO those who are distressed, puzzled, very likely embittered, by the ever-present problem of evil, by the sight and experience of pain and failure and injustice and balked endeavour, by the blatant triumph of moral wrong and the constant defeat of moral good, and perhaps most of all by the seeming indifference of God to the agonies of His creatures in the ever-recurring tragedy of wasted trust and unanswered prayer, it is little if any consolation to be told that all these things are but parts, and necessary parts, of a larger scheme wherein the will of God must ultimately come to fulfilment throughout His universe and the whole human race attain in the end, after many oscillations, to a final and stable equilibrium.

To find peace in such a solution as this would seem to require in us a pitch of altruism above what human nature can bear: it would leave us with only the dreary vaticinations of Positivism for comfort: it would suppose in the average human being a height of self-abnegation possible, perhaps, in the sterilized imagination of some bleak philosopher, but nowhere else.

THE INWARD VISION

Even to those who keep faith in a personal God of infinite goodness it is a hard saying: and of how many will it not be true that, just because such a solution is offered them as the true and only one, they *cannot* keep faith? Yet it *is* the true answer, and there is no other. The trouble is that, like many another answer to lesser problems, it raises further problems which have to be answered first.

The problem, to begin with, of God's infinity.

We can grasp the significance (at least usefully) of this attribute only if we approach it by the way of negation. In this way we take it to mean that He is subject to no limitation whatsoever whether of space or of time or of quantity. He does not reason, or foresee, or remember, or calculate, or conclude. There is in His acts no process whatever, He *is* what He does. For Him numbers do not constitute multitude, nor size magnitude. A thousand units are to Him but one unit, yet not as a mass, but as each individual one, each no less than all and all no more than each. To Him growth and completion are one thing, neither obscures the other nor is separated from it by any note of priority or succession. He has no past and no future, He looks neither backward nor forward; He lives in an eternity without beginning or continuation or end.

Plainly, such concepts as these have no positive reality for us. We can attain to them only by lifting all the boundaries of time and number and space that confine our own modes of action and existence, and because of that they can be no more to us than formulæ for things whose actual nature is absolutely beyond the scope of our order of being. But just as a mathematician can make most practical and physically valuable deductions from propositions which to the imagination appear to be self-contradictory, so, too, we can make practical application to the problems of our own lives of even these transcendental elements of the incomprehensible life of God.

And first among the immediate deductions for our present purpose, it is evident that in the mind of God the good of all is the good of each, and no less particularly the good of each because also the good of all. In other words, the final good for which I am told to look as the issue of all the pain and incoherence of my life is not the good of some remote entity called "the whole" or "the race" in which I have only the share that a drop of water has in the ocean—or, more insubstantial still, the share that present existence has in posterity—it is my own individual good as wholly and truly and singly as it is

the good of every other "I," and of all of us together.

When an individual for the sake of some desired good denies himself a present pleasure or faces pain and effort because he knows that that is the price which he must pay for it, he is doing for himself, but with infinitely less knowledge and certainty, what God, from Whom nothing is hid, ceaselessly does for him (and none the less entirely for him because also entirely for everyone else) in all the labour and suffering of which he so bitterly complains. What is lacking to him, however, is the ability to see how the individual can be identified with the whole and with all the interests of the whole without confusion or sacrifice of the least thing that is his own. We say that we must subordinate our aims and gains to those of collective humanity, and this is perfectly true. But we do not understand how this subordination involves no forfeiture or frustration or loss of any kind to ourselves. Our daily experience misleads us, from which we seem to learn that successful combination can be achieved only by the sacrifice of the best in the interest of the average, for in God's plans there can be no incompatibility or collision of ends. We have to believe—there is no other way to it—that in the final good designed by Him

from the beginning, not one cell of Being will be found missing or unfulfilled. "That which is impossible to thee is not impossible to Me," said Our Lord to Mother Julian of Norwich; "I shall save My word in all things, and I shall make all things well."

Nor is this a selfish view to take of the travail of the world in which we find ourselves implicated, as if we were to regard the whole purpose of it as converging on our own private and exclusive good. For, first, my final good does not in any way obstruct or interfere with the good of any other individual: and, secondly, my good is in the end no other than the good of God Himself. I am not lost in God in the sense that my individuality ceases to be my own. There is no neo-Platonic, or Buddhist, or other conception of obliterating absorption in the All. It is just that in its perfection my happiness is no other than the happiness of God; though none the less, but for that very reason all the more, truly my own. I do not cease to be myself because I have surrendered myself wholly to Him: there will be no surrender, no possession, no completion, if there be no "I." I do not put my sword at the service of the King by throwing it down at His feet, but by keeping it in my hand.

This, again, is a mystery—or it is mystical, if

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that be a better term. It eludes definition and exact explanation, but not plain belief. I can see it, even if I cannot see into it. Made for God, with no other significance in any part of my being except as such, it is in the meeting of us two that I, and His creative Will by which I am, are mutually fulfilled.

PAIN

PAIN, taken in the largest and most comprehensive sense, is the motive force of all progress. We are driven by the pain of discontent with our present state and by the pain of unfulfilled desire for a better state, and we are urged thereby to engage in research, to devise and to invent, aiming always at satisfying what still can never be fully satisfied.

At the beginning, for example, man found that it was "pain" to have to go everywhere on foot and to carry all his burdens on his shoulders: so he was pushed at last, probably after much laborious experiment, to invent the wheel: and starting from that, still urged by the "pain" of each successive but never more than partly adequate development, he has arrived now at the locomotive, the motor-car and the aeroplane: and still the same "pain" pushes him on to devise yet more and more perfect means of saving himself time and trouble.

And so all through every department of life. When we compare the material circumstances of civilization to-day with those of even half-a-generation ago, we recognize without difficulty

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in every advance for the better the outcome of dissatisfaction with the former things and desire for their improvement, the motive power behind the progress being, again, "pain."

This is all so obvious that it hardly seems worth while saying it. But it *is* worth while all the same, because there are so many bewildered people asking themselves querulously why there should be so much, or, indeed, any, pain in life; and they are by no means comforted when they hear that pain is simply a necessity of growth and therefore an indispensable ingredient of human existence. They fail entirely to understand that life without pain would be life motionless and incapable of motion, and therefore not life at all: that if there be no suffering there will be no achievement, and if there be no failure there will be no success. Indeed, the law binds even the lowliest forms of existence. It is "pain" (though not, of course, in any reflex sense, but just as a statement of present insufficiency and consequent need of betterment) that is behind all growth throughout the whole of nature—the root for the rod, the rod for the flower, and the flower for the fruit. And this is not an arbitrary law, an injunction laid without inherent necessity upon our order of existence: it is a quality of that existence itself that only by and through

and because of pain can it realize itself fully and so come to the perfection for which it was created.

Well, but God is infinitely powerful. He can do all things, and He could therefore have created a state of life in which pain would not be a necessity: and He is infinitely good, so *how* can He have elected not to do so and have placed us, instead, under this grievous obligation?

Here, as in all cases where one reasons about God, one is faced with this insuperable difficulty, that not only His order of being is altogether beyond our analysis and can be reached, after a fashion, only by analogy and negation, but that we cannot even state His attributes without implicitly falsifying them. He is not infinitely powerful *and* infinitely good, two things: He is one "thing" only: it is *we* who (because we cannot help ourselves) make two or more of them. Consequently, to say that His goodness should or could hold back His omnipotence, that there is something that His infinite power cannot do because of His infinite goodness, is to pronounce an incredible contradiction in terms, for to set His goodness against His power is to set each against itself, it is to say that He is imperfect because He is perfect, it is as meaningless as it would be to talk of the angles of a circle or the curves of a straight line. That, in spite of this

absurdity, we *do* so speak and *must* so speak is a consequence of the limitations of a finite intelligence at work upon an infinite object. But we must not take ourselves literally any more than the mathematician does who for certain purposes finds it convenient to regard a circle as a polygon and a straight line as an arc. Keeping, however, within that metaphor, we are obliged to say that it is because of God's goodness and because of His omnipotence that the existence which He has created for us is one which depends upon pain for its perfection, and that herein there is no injustice nor any contradiction.

But we are not left with such dry speculative gropings for our sole answer. We can interpret nothing of God, now, but through Christ. In Him God has, with His own hand, translated Himself into our language as far as that language can receive Him. In Christ, for Whom it "was necessary to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory," we have a solution to the mystery of pain which raises it from the level of a natural exigency to the height of a sacrament. In Christ, the Word, the Utterance of God, we have God "spoken" as Love: and as Christ, for love, suffered and was in pain among us, taking upon Him all our pain that has been and that is to be, making it His *as* ours

and so suffering doubly, as it were, both the pain itself and the pain that it is our pain, so, God, Who in the one man Christ became mystically one with all men, now mystically, for love, suffers and labours and is sacrificed and so enters into His glory, even now, with us and in us and for us.

Capiat qui capere potest: let him who will, ponder it. To grasp this is to grasp God, to live Him. For while on the one hand it brings Him into such fusion with us that we seem in the end to have nothing left of ourselves, not even our sufferings, our weakness or our sins: on the other we cannot but know Him, all the time, for what (though so far beyond the reach even of our thought) He really is, the "Tremendous Lover" waiting upon our will, Who dives into the uttermost recesses of our lives, seeking, if we will have Him, to make His own even the very least and lowest of what is ours, and if we will not, leaves us no rest in anything that is not Him or for Him until the pain of discontent and the pain of desire shall, by His grace, drive us wholly to Himself, in Whom alone all desire is fulfilled and there is peace at last.

CUR DEUS HOMO

THE difference between creating and making is almost the difference between something and nothing. To make is no more than to give a new shape to a thing which already exists quite independently of the maker: to create is to produce something entirely new, the whole of whose existence begins there and then. To make is to give an arbitrary form to a substance ready to hand and capable of receiving it: to create is to provide from nothing both substance and form. Creation is then, obviously, possible only to a Being Who is absolutely independent of all other existences: Who exists, therefore, of Himself. Such a Being has no need of any means to His ends: He wills, and what He wills comes on that sole account into being: the form of the created thing is His will, and the substance of it is His will. Its continued existence, therefore, in its entirety, hangs upon His continued will that it should exist. With such a Being, to will once is to will always—that is, His act of will does not simply start the object of it on its course of being (as, for instance, a watchmaker starts a watch): it supports it all through its course: equivalently,

it is renewed at every indivisible instant of its existence from the first. The will that the object should be, remains operative and specific as in the beginning so to the end. It is therefore less true to say that God created me once and now supports me than that God even now creates me. It is as if at each instant my life came to an end and at each instant was renewed. My imagination finds itself altogether defeated when it tries to picture such a degree of dependence or to find even approximate similes for it.

And this is not all. For in God's "mind" (we are obliged to use the misleading word) there is the knowledge, not only of all things that ever were or are or will be, but of all things too that ever might be but never will be, and we may think of Him as selecting, from a store of possible beings, here one and there one for real existence in time. So that His act of creation is also an act of selection: it means not only existence instead of nothing, but this particular existence instead of some other, instead of countless others. And this selection, too, is (as I may look at it) repeated and reaffirmed with every instant of my continued existence, of my repeated creation.

So that the bond that binds me to my Creator is seen to be more unthinkably close, more comprehensive yet. For when I ask myself why I was

created I cannot but remember how far and how often I have turned aside from His designs for me Who created me: and yet I must believe that still He chooses me, and still will choose me, and still for those very same designs.

In the light of such reflections as these we are confused by the vision of sin. One could imagine a generation of pure spirits introduced to the notion of sin and pronouncing that it simply could not be: that a creature could not, without a contradiction in terms, set up rebellion against his Creator: or, at least, that were such a thing possible, it would of necessity involve the immediate destruction of the creature, it would be a cancelling of the condition of creaturehood.

Yet, mysterious as sin is and always will be, it is not more mysterious than the forgiveness of sin. It is less so: for, philosophical speculations apart, this we do know, that man can sin and does sin: but how God can forgive him for it, and still more, how we can know that God *will* forgive him for it, that we do not understand, nor could we ever understand it were it not for Christ. For Christ means to us that God has made Himself a creature "by adoption" as it were, just as in Christ He has made us by adoption children of His own and participators in His life. By so doing He has armoured us against

Himself: He stands between us and Himself: He, the Eternal, by His alliance with us, creatures of an instant, saves us even in our sin from the annihilation which else were the inevitable consequence of it.

Why? Again a mystery: for Love. He has made us for Himself: made us so that we can neither fit into nor rest in any other end than Him. This is what Love, and only Love, does and must do: it aims, and must aim, to bring about a oneness which shall be as nearly an identification as yet will save the separateness of identities—"that they may be one as We also are one, I in them and Thou in Me."

Here, then, as everywhere else, the Church's law of prayer is her law of faith. She prays only "through Jesus Thy Son our Lord," through Whom, being both God and Man, her faith is that as between God and man there now may be free commerce, love and forgiveness.

THE MASTER WORD

CONSIDERED by himself as a being who should be able, without involving any other being, to give a fully satisfying account of himself, man is a failure. There are puzzles enough in nature, and we are still far from being able to fit a sufficient explanation to all of even the commonest objects that surround us, though science daily discloses more and more of the secrets of the world and throws an ever more penetrating and revealing light upon them. But man, studied by the methods which prove so successful when applied to the rest of creation, stubbornly refuses to be explained. He comes under many categories, but under none of them completely: he partakes of many natures but transcends them all: and those who claim to have fixed him for good into his place tacitly confess by their restlessness about their results, and by their ever-renewed and never-ending restatements of their conclusions, that, in fact, they have done no such thing. While stoutly denying its existence they none the less unmistakably, even if unwillingly, affirm the presence in him of an element which eludes classification and definition, a factor for which,

in spite of themselves, they are obliged to make wide allowance in all their calculations. When they have catalogued all his actuating motives, traced his impulses to their source, analysed his sensations and fears and hopes and allocated them to their respective origins, he yet, as an individual, escapes them. The explorations which seemed so exhaustive in the laboratory are proved inadequate when tested in the open air, and it is well-nigh impossible to believe that even the most dogmatic student of human nature can really feel satisfied that he has left nothing unexplained or unaccounted for when he has finished with it. Indeed, he has never finished with it. As one of their kind, but a cynic, has said, no sooner has a system of philosophy reached the maturity of its development than "the feet of them that buried" its predecessor—in its day no less complete and mature—"are at the door."

Suppose that there existed somewhere a tribe of men who, though well advanced in scientific attainment in all other respects, had not yet reached the invention of locks for their doors and boxes. And suppose that one day a key is dropped, let us say from a foreign aeroplane, into their midst: how are they going to explain it? Some, perhaps, will pronounce it to be a

weapon: others, an ornament: others, an implement of ritual or hieratic significance. They will accurately measure and weigh and analyse it, and come to a thousand conclusions as to its purpose. But, do what they will, and no matter what amount of scientific skill and speculation they may expend upon the study of it, they must forever fail to discover its real meaning, simply because the one thing which *does* explain it, a lock, is altogether unknown to them, and without that clue the problem is insoluble. The parable may be quite justly applied to the matter in hand, with God as the lock, without which man, the key, is meaningless. Until we know God we cannot know man. If a God, a Being of an independent order higher than man's, is not at least among discutable hypotheses, the meaning of man in his own order must remain hidden, or be at best no more than obscurely knowable. Without reference to God man stands in an isolation which cuts him off from all reasonable comprehension: his beginning no less than his end must remain an unattainable mystery. And, far more serious, there can be no intelligible account to offer of the stirrings and ideals which so disturbingly haunt him, those yearnings which find nothing in his own experience to satisfy them, those echoes which resist explanation by

any theory of subconscious activity or inherited memory.

Under the obsession of materialism it is, no doubt, easily possible to see in man no more than a fortuitous difference of degree above the rest of animated nature, due to accident of development through certain fortunate circumstances, and thus to fit him into a definite and completely explicable place in creation. But the conclusion will not stand the test even of its own proof, which, indeed, most uncomfortably turns out to be a demonstration of the exact contrary. For no other being than he has any curiosity about itself, or any concern whatsoever with other ends than the immediate one, or any will to restrain its instincts except under the stress of fear or of a mechanical association of sensations. The moment that a being begins to wonder what he is and whether he is different from other beings, by that very fact he delivers a categorical assertion that he *is* different, incommensurably different, from all of them.

The presence of desire which is not mere physical desire is an incontestable sign of a nature which is at least in its better part supra-physical: in other words, which is in its better (and therefore truer) self spiritual: and when there is added to this that for many (and those the nobler part)

of these desires man has never found, and has been forced to the conclusion that he never will find, the satisfaction that he craves, the case is complete. The protestations of those who deny this are their own sufficing refutation.

So we will face the truth, which is also the best way to see it, and declare that man is *not* sufficient for himself and that there is not in all the wide world of his fellow-creatures, be their nature what it may, any one that is or could possibly be sufficient for him. He must look elsewhere, and he must look up. He must look to some Being of a nature superior to his own and different from it, not in degree alone, but also in kind, since among his own kind he cannot find what he must have. It costs the Theist little effort to do this: once admit the existence of a God perfect in Himself (that is, without limitation in any direction or from any cause whatsoever) and the mystery is on the way to solution, for it will follow that in such a Being, since it is nowhere else, there must be what he has everywhere else looked for without success and of whose existence *somewhere* his urge to seek for it is proof. Add the notion of creation as the externation, so to speak, of himself by the creator, and the answer to the mystery is at hand, even though there be yet need of much thought and reasoning, and

of hardly less humility of the will, before that answer yields up to its full meaning.

The full meaning, if it is properly apprehended, comes to this, that man (considered historically) cannot be completely himself in the really significant part of his being unless and until he is, somehow, united with that God. There must be an incarnation of God in him, or (what is the same thing from another angle of vision) a deification of himself in God. He must see himself fitted into God, and God justifying and explaining him, as a key fits into and is justified and explained by the lock for which it was fashioned. And this must be not in the flights of speculation alone, but in his very own flesh and blood upon the earth and under the sky of his daily experience.

Well, in the Christian mystery of the Incarnation he finds at last what he is looking for. There is the Master Word which solves the puzzle of his life. Of himself in a purely natural state he knows nothing, for, historically, man has never been in that condition. It is with his nature in the supernatural order, as it is now and has been from the beginning, that he is alone concerned, and the better he knows himself thus the more he is conscious of the urgent need of a complement to himself. A thousand proofs assure

him that he stands at the head of created things and that there is therefore no use in his looking for his complement among them, but he at once recognizes that he will find it in the Incarnate God, for there he will find a Man Whose nature is already at its term, "being made perfect" through His oneness with God, the key at rest in its own lock. Support (if it were needed) for his assurance comes to him even from those who do not share it, for, as if by tacit consent, the whole world has given to Christ a place among historical figures entirely His own. No one thinks seriously of placing Him, however supremely, at the head of any class or category. Where some have pretended to do this the motive has always been pitifully evident, and they have always done it with the air of one venturing upon something singular. No: you can deny His existence or attack His character and His teaching: yet, even though you make of Him no more than a name or a myth, He none the less stands out, even so, as unique, as absolutely refractory to classification. And so it must be, for He represents the ideal of man fulfilled and complete through that element which cannot be isolated because it never has been present in any man but He, the perfect harmony, namely, with God, for which indeed all men were designed and

created, to which they may and must ever approach, but which in this life they can never fully attain.

But in Him we can study the pattern, from Him we can learn the method of conformity to it, and, best and most actual of all, with Him—in, by, because of Him, *as* Him—grow nearer and nearer to it. It is not so much (it is hardly at all) a thing dependent upon study and reflection and comparison: it is the firm grasping of a great root fact and the letting something be done in us rather than doing anything ourselves. When the Disciples on Mount Thabor, coming to their senses after that transcendent vision and leaving the plans and resolutions that it had inspired, looked dazedly about them, they “saw only Jesus.” It was He Himself, and not anything that they had reasoned or concluded about Him, that mattered: and He Himself, not transfigured nor “shining as the sun,” but in His everyday appearance which was also their own, that it was “good” for them to be with. When they came down again what worked the slow change in them which was, in spite of grievous and repeated failure, to turn them into Apostles, other Christs, martyrs for their belief and missionaries of it to the world for all time, was less that they tried to live His life than that He was all the

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time living theirs. In Him God was receiving from a Man all that He had created man to give Him, and because of the manhood of Christ God now receives from us men, in proportion as we yield ourselves up as His members, all that He created us to give Him.

Once again, then, the Master Word is Christ. It is a name in which is held the whole answer to all the mystery of our life. It tells us why we are and what we are and that which we shall be—there is no other Name given us under Heaven. By it we are saved: brought, that is, to the perfection of the end for which from the beginning we were made.

TILL CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU

IN the person of Christ we have God translated into human language and human modes of thought and action as far as these are capable of representing Him. He is the *practical* interpretation of God, which is, after all, the utmost that we can receive, and without Him we could have had no such interpretation.

But Christ is also the exemplar of the highest to which human nature can attain in its task of giving back to God that reflection of Himself for which it was created. He is The Man—"Ecce Homo!" said Pilate, prophesying, as Caiaphas did, without knowing it.

In the Incarnation, therefore, we are given the perfect human conception of God and the perfect divine conception of man—"Who seeth me seeth the Father," and "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

The perfection of man is thus the imitation of Christ: an imitation which aims at identification. We have to set Christ before us as a sculptor sets his model, but the material in which we are to reproduce the image of this model is not

wax or clay, but ourselves. Our perfection is the transformation of ourselves into Him, interpreting Him, as it were, each in our own individual "medium," different yet the same in each separate soul. The saints are such transformations, such identifications, carried out in every conceivable variation of character and circumstance.

Saint Paul tells the Galatians this very thing. He is in labour with them, he says, until Christ be formed in them. The metaphor implies that there is in the redeemed human soul a Christ-germ that must be developed: an unborn Christ that must be brought to birth: an exigency for the Christ-life that must be satisfied.

It implies that the imitation of Christ is not a foreign thing, a form to be forced upon the soul in addition to—much less in spite of—its own natural "shape." Rather it assumes that the fulfilment of the best that is in us, the term of our noblest faculties and desires, is the life lived and taught by Christ, and that anything less means the frustration of these.

Another saying of Saint Paul's confirms this. "I live," he writes in the same letter: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." As if he would say (for he is speaking only of the life of grace), I have life in the eyes of God only so far as the

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life that I have is the life of Christ, only so far as I *am* Christ. God looks for Christ in me, and I am alive—I am what He created me to be—in proportion as He sees Christ in me.

Of all things, therefore, the most important thing for me is to *know* Christ: “Now this is eternal life, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent”—through whom alone, indeed, they can know Thee.

This is not a task of scholarship and it does not require a critical study of the Gospel text. What it does require is a love of Christ such as he can hardly miss who reads the Gospel in the simplest spirit, and with this an interior *silence*, an attention to the Holy Ghost within, who “will bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you.”

It means giving scope and space and air to the best that is in us; room to the Word struggling for utterance within the soul which, made for Him, will be forever restless until it finds Him in itself and itself in Him, and having found Him, by His grace holds Him and will not let Him go.

It is the Incarnation ever repeated, or rather, never ended. God made man in Christ, and in Him and through Him made man in all men—“for ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

THE LIFE OF OUR LIFE

THE life of Christ is much more than an example or a model for us; it is our very life itself. In a manner which, though it baffles our reason to explain it, is yet, as a fact, within the compass of our knowledge, He may be said to have lived, not as a prototype alone, but really (and none the less but rather the more really because mystically) the life of each of us *as* each of us. The past tense is, in fact, incorrect here, for in the timelessness of God there is no past as there is no future: hence it is true (however incomprehensible) to say rather that He *lives* the life of each, as each, now—*our* “now.” The very indefiniteness of the Gospel, its carelessness of historical precision in matters of detail that are not essential, is an aid to us in accepting this interpretation of the Life that it records, for the figure of Christ which it presents remains with as little of the normal limitations of local setting, occupation, or period, as words could possibly leave it. When our souls are sufficiently attuned to this acceptance of Him we are sensible in countless ways of His oneness with us. Perhaps He becomes, on this account, less of a distinct

historical figure removed from us by the differences of time and race, but in a better and more significant way He is thus immeasurably more distinct and real. For with all other historical persons, whatever their influence upon the rest of mankind and however far-reaching and enduring, their own individual personality is circumscribed by their completed mortal lives: but with Him, the Divine Person, it is not any mere influence, but His very self that endures, and He does not, for all His identification with us, become any the less definitely Himself but rather the more so, for it is we who begin to live, now, not our own lives but His.

The growth of this perception of Christ as really, and not merely in figure, the Life of our life is paralleled and foreshown in the Gospels by the development of His significance to His Apostles during the different stages of their apprehension of Him. At first He was to them what at first He is to us, a wondrously attractive personality, unique and complete in His holiness and in His power, one to love and to follow, to imitate as far as lay in them, even if still removed from them by the impassable gulf that separates the born leader, the genius, from his followers. We have, of course, what they had not, the knowledge of His consubstantiality with the

Father. But still essentially it is on the natural side, by all that appeals to us through purely human channels—teaching, example, companionship, sight, touch and hearing—that He is first established in our reverence and in our affection. So, too, with them. So long as under their eyes and in their hearing He healed the sick and commanded the forces of nature, spoke wise and wonderful things and gave in all His words and actions evidences of sanctity supreme and perfect, so long did He win and keep their affection and their loyalty, but not yet did they understand or really know Him. He could not yet be to them all that He meant to be and must be if He were to be anything: that was something too fine and intimate for them to perceive while their knowledge of Him was still so limited by their senses and their affections. So for the power and the triumph and the joy had to be substituted weakness and failure and sorrow, for life and companionship, death and (as it seemed) separation for ever. They had to learn that “the flesh profiteth nothing; it is the spirit that quickeneth,” and that the terms in which they thought of Him and addressed Him—Master, Lord, King—though they were true and real in themselves, were all wrong as they applied them. They were to be scandalized in Him before they could

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appreciate and venerate Him as they ought, they must run from Him before they could be truly His followers. The language in which they would learn later to think and speak of Him should be entirely new, the reversal of the old and a transformation of its implied values.

So in the Risen Christ was given back to them their lost Master indeed, but teaching them and meaning to them now something vastly different from what they had understood before, when in His mortal flesh He had condescended to their ignorance and their prepossessions. It was almost as the difference between the body and the spirit. He stood in their presence the living proof of the truth of those strange paradoxes which had sounded so meaningless in their ears: that not *through* pain and defeat and death does Christ come to victory—and after Him all we who are Christs because of Him—but that these things *are* the victory: that a King such as they had imagined would be no king, and a Redeemer such as they had expected no redeemer, because he would not have conquered the world but have surrendered to it.

And as this knowledge was for them born of grief and fear and disappointment, and this light came out of what seemed like final darkness,

so, too, for us the passage from our first inadequate perception of the Divine Person in Whom we believe is through the loss, just as terrifying and as distressing, of all (so it seems) that He was and meant to us. And as with them so with us; it is only when He Himself appears from nowhere, "the doors being shut," and says "Peace be with you," that we see Him again, or rather, perhaps, see Him fairly for the first time. "If Christ be not risen again then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain": it is only in the Risen Christ that we can see how evil, against which we yet must strive, runs its course and is found at the end to be the good which it seemed to be resisting and destroying: how God must abandon us in order that He may be the more sure of us: how prayer is answered with the refusal of that for which we pray and is granted in the refusal: how "the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain," not because they will be changed, but because we shall be changed. The ways of God with men must seem to us hard and cruel and capricious until His own life and passion and death as man are seen anew in the light of His resurrection and of His triumph, not in spite of them, but in and because of them. The love and pity which would have stepped in between Him and His enemies would

have served His enemies, not Him. So then our lives take order and form and purpose, and though we suffer none the less (indeed, just because we suffer all the more) we suffer now in company, with understanding, still puzzled, perhaps, but never doubting.

But not even now may we rest in our apprehension of the Christ. Perhaps the Apostles, after this revolution in their minds, looked forward to a continuation on a more assured plane of much the same kind of companionship with their Master as they had enjoyed while yet what He said was so dark and incomprehensible to them. At least, now that He had conquered death, they need fear no other separation. In His train they had come through disappointment and disaster and had drunk fear and sorrow to their dregs: this that had followed was peace and security: they saw now and understood: life had no further fears for them and could hide no further surprises: He was with them again just as before and so He would remain, always within call and ready to appear as they needed Him. Certainly there might be, there would be—the past had taught them that—many anxious hours and perhaps much trial of their faith. But He was at hand: patience; and He would surely stand amongst them once more and dissipate

with a word the darkest cloud that could ever oppress them.

But they had more to learn, and we have more to learn. Not in that way could Christ fulfil His office perfectly amongst us or amongst them. He was not yet fully revealed to them, any more than when we have grasped, as we think, the lessons of His Life and have seen our own mirrored and foreshadowed in it, is He fully revealed to us. For us as for them it is expedient that He should go: go, and come back to live at last in us a life in which there shall be no thought or possibility of parting. A life which shall be unlike any that human thought could foresee or can describe, unlike any that we have up till then experienced. A life, too, which no amount of study or prayer or any other preparation can procure for us. We have just to wait for it, to "stay in the city," hoping. "He commanded them," says the Acts, "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith He) by my mouth." Then He was taken out of their sight, this time never to return as they had known Him.

So all the learning and the unlearning and the learning over again had gone, as it seemed, for nothing: and the suffering and the loss had been

made good only to be renewed again, renewed and redoubled: and the fulfilment that had seemed to be final had ended in nothing but a command to wait—for what? They were to wait, not knowing: for the promise of the Father can have had little real significance for them then.

Yet when that promise was made good, on Pentecost Day, what a world of difference! You look in vain amongst these men for one familiar trait. They spoke with tongues, they were filled with the Holy Ghost, they worked signs and wonders, they had entered upon a new plane of being. All their old values had gone with their old ways of life and their accustomed interests. The spirit of Christ was identified with the spirit of man: they had nothing now to learn: they knew. Wondering persons who saw and heard them thought them mad, “full of new wine,” as indeed they were: for if they looked back at all upon the misplaced doubts and hardly less misplaced satisfactions of the life so suddenly ended and so strangely renewed, they must have felt as if they had been given to drink of some new living Wine which had recreated their being to its remotest fibre.

They could not say what had happened any more than we can say what is happening when the image and the shadow are fading away from

before the verity which they have so long cloaked. A new life in God, a God-life, reaching from end to end, comprehending everything from the greatest to the least into a single point of significance, wherein everything rests as one thing, ourselves and our brethren, this life and the next. Suffering and parting and death are felt, perhaps more keenly than ever, but they do not matter. God matters, and there is nothing else.

But this is not, as perhaps it would seem to be, a kind of permanent and established ecstasy, and it is far from producing in the soul any lofty indifference or insensibility to the material existence surrounding us, of which we are no less than before a part. Indeed, the sharpening of the spiritual perceptions is also a sharpening of their natural counterparts, and perhaps one is, if anything, more sensitive to Being of every sort than ever before. But it becomes impossible to think of anything or to see any reality in anything apart from God: which is, after all, to see things as they really are.

To each their own life, fitted by God to each: but to all unimaginable fullness of His own Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PASSIO CHRISTI CONFORTA ME

MAN for the completion of his being needs God, Who made him for Himself. Without God he is meaningless: he is like a key that fits no lock. In his free-will he possesses a self-determining faculty, but this freedom is given to his will that he may bring it freely into harmony with the will of God: in the achievement of that harmony consists the effort and the measure of holiness.

Now in Christ alone was this willaccord perfect: in Him alone were divine and human activity at one: and by that title, were there no other, He is head of the regenerated, recreated, human race restored to its pristine supernatural elevation—"as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive again."

In Jesus of Nazareth there lived a Man in the straitest union with God. Lived, that is, in perfection the life which we in the beginning were shaped to live, and now, after ages of separation, are, because of Jesus of Nazareth, once again shaped to live.

Our life, therefore, is to be, now, the Christ-life

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if it is to be life at all—"I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ's is not only the type and model of the new life: He is not only the teacher and ruler of it: He *lives* it in us, He forms Himself, He repeats, or rather continues, Himself in it, so that our work does not stop at the imitation of Him as the artist's work stops at the imitation, in his own medium and according to his own vision, of the model before him: our work is the conscious appropriation of His life: it is not a new thing to be done, but a thing already done to be recognized and admitted. In Christ God entered into our family: and we, with whom He is one mystical body, cannot now get God out of our blood. The whole issue is whether we are going to live as of the Blood: whether this knowledge is going to rule our life and set its standards as the consciousness of honourable lineage should rule and set the standard of our natural life. For my life *is* Christ's: that is what it stands for in the sight of God. The question is, what sort of a presentation of it do I offer Him?

For, as in His earth-life as Jesus of Nazareth, so now in His mystic life as me, Christ will suffer pain and will meet with indifference and unbelief and revolt. Inevitably: because in my fleshly nature (this "body of death") He will

find again those elements of the World which opposed Him in Palestine. Yet so closely are we now oned that although it is I that am the cause of the suffering it is I no less that suffer, and because it is I it is Christ too.

But, "ought not Christ to suffer these things, and so to enter into His glory?" And so, again, in and with me, the story of His life is repeated, and my pain, and the pain of all the World, is the Passion of Christ.

I can cast Him off: I can deny Him and crucify Him in myself, now, as the Jews, symbols of the fleshly man, did then: but I cannot be rid of Him, as neither could they. He may die in me as He died amongst them: but, if so, He will rise again to my destruction as He rose again to theirs. For my fall or for my resurrection to Him I am bound.

Well, we can only pray as the two disciples at Emmaus prayed, Remain with us! Not lest He may forget and leave us, but lest we may forget and leave Him. Not disillusion nor darkness, nor chill experience, nor the example of others, nor the knowledge of myself: not an agony in the garden, nor mockery, nor a crucifixion shall have power over me if I bear in remembrance that all these things that are mine are His too—His because they are mine who am Him, mine because they are His who is me.

THE PRESENCE

IN the matter of faith in the Blessed Sacrament the most learned theologian has no advantage over the humblest believer. Both know that He is there : the former has, no doubt, a more correct theological apprehension of His Presence, but it does not at all follow that therefore the response of his heart and will and affections to the fact is more complete ; indeed, it may well be that it is less so, since the clearness and definition of a mental concept is by no means always the measure of its practical acceptance as a reality. For both it is enough to know that on the altar is Christ, not a picture, nor a statue, nor a relic, nor any other memorial of Him, but His own self, really there.

Well, we believe this, but we remain quite calm about it. We enter our churches, where He is, without a thrill ; and we do not hold our breaths when the Tabernacle is opened. In that Presence we can think of other things, and it is often very difficult not to think of other things.

This violent contrast between our belief and our realization of that belief is most distressing to us. It awakens again that uneasy fear of

unreality in our spiritual life which haunts us all from time to time. It makes us—no, not doubt, but—puzzle over the belief itself. For surely the Real Presence ought to engender in us a real sense of itself: we ought in Communion, for instance, to be aware of something like a shock, a vibration, a repercussion in our very bodies of that almost unthinkable contact—it is more, it is a mixing—of our created being with the uncreated Substance of God Himself? We react to the presence of our own fellow-creatures, and in progressive degree according to their importance to us: they stir us easily to reverence, or love, or fear, or the opposites. But though divine faith should be as compelling as sight, and it makes us here aware of a Presence immeasurably greater than the greatest that we can imagine among ourselves, we yet remain unimpressed.

Of course the fault is in ourselves: it is our weakness, the weakness of children to whom big words are simply troublesome sounds signifying nothing, and who can with difficulty understand what they cannot touch and handle: but then, could not He Who made the blind see and the deaf hear condescend to our childishness and contrive His sacramental presence in some way that would seize our senses and imagination more irresistibly?

THE PRESENCE

Doubtless: but is it not probable that if He did so the Blessed Sacrament would be less instead of more to us: that we might worship, indeed, more reverentially, but on that very account with more formality? A Presence of greater splendour and power would attract, maybe, a readier homage, but at the cost, perhaps, of what is most precious in its intention, freedom and ease of access to it. We should prostrate ourselves in adoration before a Christ visibly enthroned upon the altar, but could we pay Him a three-minutes' visit, on one knee, and speak to Him, anyhow and as they tumble in and out of our minds, of our trifling business of hopes and fears?

One feels, indeed, that he has chosen to be among us in this humble and hidden way precisely because He does not *want* to be specially noticed or ceremoniously approached. For it is only when one is thoroughly at home with others that one can move about amongst them without comment: we stand upon ceremony with those who are strangers or otherwise unfamiliar to us. It is true that the Church surrounds the mysteries of the Eucharist with solemn and dignified rites, and wisely, for thus are they guarded from possible irreverence and desecration, and a uniform scheme of worship is besides established by which is emphasized the universality of His

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Presence wherever she reaches. These observances are necessary, but none the less they are a concession to our weakness, as is proved by the inevitable decline and collapse of the sacramental sense wherever the solemnities of ritual are despised or rejected.

But even so, what can be more simple and unobtrusive than a Low Mass, and yet, at the same time, like the silent Presence on the altars of our churches, what more dynamic, more pregnant with immensities? Once in a way—it is well, perhaps, that it is not often—the veils drop, and for a fleeting second one believes no more, one sees. It is not meant to last any more than Thabor was meant to last: not for us is it “good to be here” any more than it was for the three Apostles: we, as they were, would be numbed and dazzled if the vision endured: and as they, “lifting up their eyes” when the glory had departed “saw no one but only Jesus” in that shape in which alone He could be to them what He wanted to be, so we, whether on the corporal, in the monstrance, or behind the shut doors of the Tabernacle, can see Him truly, though but with the eyes of faith, in the only way in which, now, He can be to us what He intended when He devised His sacramental Presence. For he preserves His impenetrable disguise of bread, not only because

thus we may ineffably feed upon Him while still remaining in the natural order of our being and habits, but also because He can, thus disguised, mix with us unregarded, and therefore the more intimately, as He could never in any living form.

To thrill or catch our breath in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament—though well might we do so—is, therefore, something like violating the careful incognito of a royal prince.

I might be stirred by the company of a saint or of a great hero: but Christ is out of all categories: His pre-eminence over all saints and heroes is not one of degree, however superlative: even in His humanity He reflects the infinite simplicity of His Godhead: and the truest worship of Him, which is the truest acknowledgment of His Presence amongst us, is not by emotion but by faith.

Saint Paul tells us that “faith is the substance of things hoped for.” The “things hoped for” are the eternal realities of which all earthly things are but wavering and doubtful shadows, and so long as we are of the earth earthly, the whole reality, the substance, of these things, is our faith.

So, then, we are not distressed that this stupendous reality of Emmanuel, God with us, can be so little real to our earthly faculties and can find

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so trivial a response in our emotions. He would have it so, because so, in fact, is He nearer to us and we are nearer to His heart's desire. We take His Presence with a simplicity which is a radiation from that Presence itself.

WITH DESIRE I HAVE DESIRED

IT is doubtless inherent in our nature to be egocentric, to refer all our estimates in the first place to ourselves. We can hardly avoid taking our own tastes and ideals as the measure of what is good and fitting in the world in which we move. I am the biggest, or at least the most immediately obvious, thing in my own experience: what I take in from outside I take in trimmed and shaped to fit my own capacity: there can be nothing in my mind and therefore nothing the object of my volition for or against, but what has come into it adapted and moulded by my own special methods of apprehension. Hence the child is wholly selfish, and only progressively less so in the measure that a wider knowledge of life and of other selves may teach it that there are other modes of apprehension, other standards of value, other ends than its own. Some remain children in this respect all their lives through: only under pressure, and then probably with secret reserves, can they be brought to accept facts or judgments based upon premises not of their own positing. This is not

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always to their own advantage: not infrequently it leads them to assume burdens and obligations which they not only need not, but even sometimes should not, bear: which, just because they mistakenly shoulder them, they also misunderstand and misuse. Clearly, if I am wrong in estimating the significance of a thing, I shall just so far be wrong in my use of it. If I take as first and foremost to concern my own self what in reality concerns in the first place someone else, I shall assume responsibilities and incur labours which may be altogether unwarranted and wasted. And even if the consequences do not go so far as that, at least I am bound to miss much of the meaning and benefit of what I so misapprehend.

It may not at first sight seem probable or even possible that in the matter of the right use and understanding of the Blessed Sacrament one could make such a mistake with such results. Surely it is established beyond all need of question that in this, the central object of our worship, the patent and sufficing motive of its institution was that I should ineffably nourish my soul upon the very Flesh and Blood of Christ: that I should have at my will the privilege of a converse and an intimacy with Him, only less material, but not less real, than had His disciples in Palestine: that I should have all my days a visible Throne

WITH DESIRE I HAVE DESIRED

for my homage and a focus for my faith: that I should find in every church and chapel not a house of prayer alone, but a Chamber of the Presence?

Well, but is not this to leave something out, and that, perhaps, the most important thing of all? "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you"—"*I* have desired. *You* knew nothing of it: you could not have imagined it: you could not have wanted it: you will never understand it. It is *I* that have had the thought that only I could make into a reality. It is for Myself, and only for you because in My heart you and I are one."

So I see that His design in the Blessed Sacrament is not so much that He may give Himself to me as that He may take me to Himself: not so much that I may see Him on the Altar as that He may see me before the Altar: not so much that I may go up to the rails to receive Him as that He may come down to the rails to receive me.

With desire, indeed. So great, so imperious, that not even the laws of nature of His own establishing shall stand in the way of it. The whole shall be no greater than the part: number and distance shall signify nothing: there shall be accidents without their natural substance,

presence without space, breaking without division, consumption without change or corruption. Of all this it is Himself, not I, that is the beginning and the end: and knowing as I do what the response has been, and that He always knew what the response would be, I could almost believe that He cares nothing for any recognition or understanding of what He has done. For does not the very nature of the Bread, helpless matter as it still seems to be, stand for a symbol of Desire at rest, fulfilled in itself, asking nothing more?

The centre of gravity is, then, shifted from myself to Him: and, as between us two, it is perhaps nearer the truth to say that He is in my presence than that I am in His. All the motive and the meaning, if no less all the mystery, is here. We could never have imagined, nor shall we ever understand it.

REPARATION

THE idea of reparation is chief among the implications of the devotion to the Sacred Heart: the idea, that is, of offering oneself, somehow, in atonement and satisfaction for the sufferings which Christ has borne upon earth, and of making good the misunderstanding and neglect with which He has since met from those for whom he suffered, wherein we, not individually alone but also by virtue of our family bond with all humanity, have our guilty share.

A very little reflection suffices to convince us of our responsibility and to arouse a consequent desire to discharge ourselves of it. But unless the desire is to remain just that and nothing more, or is to spend itself in barren emotion, we have further to convince ourselves that this idea of Reparation is both a real and a practicable thing. And at once we are confronted with a serious difficulty. For Christ, surely, suffers no more: "He is risen, He is not here. . . . Why seek ye the living with the dead?" He has suffered these things and so has entered into His glory. Is it not too late? The trial is ended, the fear, the agony, and the desolation. Death is swallowed

up in victory: He has trodden the winepress alone and now the Vintage is over: it is past the eleventh hour. It looks as if there were nothing left us but to be sorry that we have done nothing. And yet, what could we ever have done? And, especially, what can we do now to make up for having done nothing?

We have to remind ourselves that life may be conceived as moving upon two planes, or in two dimensions. There is the plane of Time, of inexorable and irrevocable succession, in which the past is forever the past and can borrow nothing from the future: and there is the plane of Eternity, upon which, incomprehensibly to us now, all things are at once, without priority or sequence—the plane upon which the name of God is “I am that am,” for we can no more say of God that He *was* than that He *will be*, but only that He *is*. It is beyond us to define this plane or dimension of existence because we have no other means of expression than the incommensurable terms of our own experience, so that while we are trying to explain what it is we are by the very fact making it what it is not.

But in Christ, in whom the necessary and the contingent, the temporal and the eternal, are joined in one Divine Person, these two planes meet and interpenetrate. Historically, this par-

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ticular Man, Jesus of Nazareth, was born and lived and suffered in Time. At any given moment during His life He had a past and a future, He looked backward and He looked forward. And yet because of what He was—because of the mystery of what He is—all these things forever *are*: “Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day and the same forever.” He is “the Lamb standing as it were slain,” “the First and the Last, who was dead and is alive,” He “with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration.” And because Christ is God His real life (however hidden from us and however beyond our comprehension) is the life of God, wherein all that for us must ineluctably be dissected into past, present and future, for Him (and therefore in reality) simply *is*—as it were, in an indivisible point.

Well, then, in practical terms, expressed (as they must be) in our own dimension, the theory of Reparation comes to this. First, that the sufferings of Christ, over, as it seems to us, centuries ago, mystically (but not on that account any the less really) are of to-day and of to-morrow: and, secondly, that the sympathy and the acts of atonement which we offer to-day or will offer to-morrow, mystically again, but still no less really, were (or rather, *are*) offered to Him in His need.

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One cannot, it is true, help feeling that this is only because He *foresaw* what we should do, and that, therefore, the consolation that He drew from us was, as it were, anticipatory: and this reflection inevitably detracts from our sense of the reality of our compassion. But "foresaw" is not in the right tense, nor is it even the right verb. On my plane the thing was yet to do: on the plane of reality it was done.

Reparation is, therefore, a real thing. It belongs indeed, to the region of high mystery, to an order of life above my own, transcending altogether my understanding: yet into this order, because of Christ, even I can reach.

At the cost of some apparent verbal incongruity I must say that by what I shall do perhaps a year hence I offer (not "offered" nor "will offer") consolation to Christ two thousand years ago. I can really and efficaciously, to-day, share in all that He bears (not "bore") in body and in mind all that long while ago. I can "fill up in my flesh those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ," make of my own life and passion, that is, one thing with His. I can dare to say as Saint Paul dared to say: "With Christ am I nailed to the Cross."

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

TO do God's will is the whole aim and end of our existence, apart from which our life has no significance whatever. All rightness, all virtue, all success reduces to this or it is nothing at all. In a sense, we cannot help doing His will in spite of ourselves, for God does not change or adapt Himself to new circumstances. In a way which there is no use attempting to understand, His Will, in spite of all the opposition and hindrance and perversion and rebellion that we can bring against it, is fulfilled completely without the smallest deviation, for the accomplishment of His plan depends upon absolutely no other thing or person but Himself: He is not limited or affected one way or the other by anything outside Himself: nothing can either aid or obstruct Him. Even when in His expressed will (as in the Commandments) He is defied, there is no change in Him, but the change is in us who defy Him. When we break His laws it is nothing of His that is broken, but much, very much, of ours. To us God's plan of the world seems like some great machine, the working of which we can at will arrest, or at least complicate: and we

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suppose that He has some method of compensation by which, in the end, all the stoppages and aberrations are somehow counterbalanced and made good, so that, in spite of everything, the ultimate result comes right.

But this is no better than childish: the truth is not that God, by the exercise of His infinite power and knowledge, is able to override and readjust what we have wilfully or ignorantly disturbed, but rather that there never is nor ever could be anything to be either overridden or readjusted on our account. For doing the will of God is in no way commensurable with doing the will of a fellow-creature, because my accord or disagreement with His will has no reference at all to Him but altogether to myself. In Him "there is no change or shadow of alteration," but in me there is: whether I sin against Him or whether I do not, His love of me remains the same, but I do not remain the same. The sun is no less the sun because I am blind, but if I am blind it is no sun to me.

God has created us and all other things for that absolute good which is Himself—we try to make this intelligible by bringing Him into our own order and saying that it is for His "glory." If we resist His will we do evil, but this does not detract from His essential glory or effect any

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alteration in His will, for that would mean that He could be limited by or be dependent upon the will of His creatures, which would be a contradiction in terms. The evil wrought, therefore, and the frustration of His will is in ourselves and ours alone is the hurt, because our whole constitution, bodily and spiritual, is framed for no other purpose than the exact performance of His will. It is as if a fine and complicated instrument constructed for one delicate operation only were to be used for some coarse and trivial piece of work.

But if God has designed me to be, let us say, a martyr, an apostle, an example of heroic charity or penance or contemplation, and I become none of these things, is not His will really frustrated then? If my failure in that case is to my own hurt, how can it not also affect Him whose will it must have been that I should not fail?

Granting for the purposes of argument that one is aware of such a call and that there is no mistake about it, what do these terms represent, after all, but our inadequate effort to give definite and specific shape to a thing which, in fact, under all shapes, is but one reality, the performance, namely, of His will? There is in God's intentions for me nothing, absolutely nothing, but that. I call it martyrdom, confessorship,

contemplation, but these denominations are, like the colours into which the spectroscope splits yet without dividing or corrupting the single ray of white light, not components or members or varieties of His one single will but translations of it, or rather modes of acceptance or vision of it, adapted to the unique individual *me* as God made me. What God's will is for me may, in my "medium" so to call it, become martyrdom or the active apostolate and yet be neither of these things as I understand them. Just as the varieties of musical form are in fact one thing, Music, which may be said to be wholly in each but not limited to any of them, so the will of God for me remains His immutable will for me even though it should be expressed as martyrdom and I should never be a martyr, because His will cannot be confined within any one form, but while it is wholly in each form as I see it, yet it is not limited to any one nor dependent for its expression upon it.

Saint John of the Cross, speaking of revelations and visions, says that even when these are explicit and certainly genuine we cannot depend upon them, for however plain and obvious they may be they are none the less "an abyss and a depth of the Spirit, and therefore to limit them to our own sense and apprehension of them is

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to grasp the air and the motes floating in it: the air disperses, and our hand is empty.”

So that though it should be revealed to me in a manner which leaves no room for doubt that the revelation comes from God that, for instance, I am to evangelize the heathen and thus fulfil the end for which I was placed in the world, it yet does not follow that I shall ever do any such thing: and if I never do any such thing it yet does not follow that I have misunderstood the revelation or that I have failed in my vocation.

Indeed, it is true to say that for the most part God *cannot* tell me what His will is for me, not because of any defect on His side but because of the defects on my side. A mother *cannot* tell her little child of the difficulties that will confront it when it is grown up, not because she does not know of them or cannot describe them, but because the child cannot possibly understand them however she describe them. No skill or patience could convey to a child of three years of age an understanding of the facts of politics, for instance, or of commerce or engineering.

So God, Whose most intelligible characteristic is His complete and absolute independence, and in Whose mind, therefore, ideas are not constructed by the process of comparison and inference as they are with us, *cannot*, because of this

unbridgeable difference between our modes of knowledge, convey to us His will in our regard as it is in His eternal comprehension: the inability being, as in the case of the child, on our side wholly. True, since He is God, He has methods of access to our minds surpassing the natural means of apprehension which are our sole instruments of knowledge, and this mystic wisdom He can and does infuse into those to whom He wills to give it. But we have no title to it, we cannot win or deserve it, we must not therefore expect or build upon it: it is not necessary to our perfect performance of His will for us and is outside what we call, from the standpoint of our experience, His "ordinary" providence.

Nor can we, when we have it, communicate it to anyone else. There is abundant proof of this in the writings of the great mystics which for the generality of readers are full of baffling obscurities, and for those who have some share in the secret are intelligible only because these recognize out of their own experience what the writers are trying, in the face of insurmountable difficulty, to explain.

To seek to know the will of God in my regard, except in the vaguest terms, is then to attempt what lies entirely outside the scope of my natural

faculties. There is, however, in me an *obediential* aptitude, as it is called, for attaining, through God's free action upon my soul, to knowledge the possession of which, though I could never achieve it naturally, yet does not involve a contradiction of my nature however much it may transcend it. In this region of knowledge the will of God is understood as something which eludes all human specification, which therefore it is not only impossible for me to learn but would be altogether unprofitable to me if I could learn it. The logical conclusion consequently is that the performance of His will on my part consists essentially in my sincere *desire* to perform it, and that however conveniently (and so, within the bounds of my nature, on that account quite truly) I represent this will as some definite practical vocation which I must do my utmost to follow, I must yet always bear in mind that that vocation, as I represent it, is in itself no more than a formula.

I am not on that account dispensed from taking as a literal expression of His will what the Church and my own conscience tells me is such, for only by so doing will it be possible for me to obey it, and I have no right to any other expression of it. But I shall be strongly armed against the discouragement and the shadow of despair which

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dog the path of the idealist if I never allow myself to forget that the *substance* of my hopes must of necessity remain hidden from me "till God has made the whole complete."

God's will is done in me when my will is with constancy bent to His whatever it may be: when all that I want—or want to want—is what He wants. For in God's eyes my success is not that in the end I have done what I tried to do, but that up to the end I have tried to do it.

THE MIND OF THE SAINTS

IT is probably as good a definition as any to say that a saint is one in whom God has His unrestricted way. It will not be absolutely accurate, since such a state is not to be found in complete perfection so long as the will remains however little outside our control: so long, that is, as our actions are not all, and always, entirely our own: and this they can never be while we are the subjects of impulse and appetite which (however carefully guarded) are independent of our free volition. Indeed the Church teaches as much when she lays it down that no one, without such a privilege as was possessed by Our Blessed Lady, can all his life through avoid at least occasional venial sin. Lives of the saints, as too often they are written, may easily give us a quite contrary impression and leave us with such a picture of the perfection of sanctity as might well drive us to despair, since it paints the saint as one lifted right out of the world of human frailties. We shall not be stimulated by teaching or example which seems to us to postulate first a nature entirely different from our own. Therefore we are obliged to assume that even a saint

is, after all, only an approximation, and that sanctity is less a finished achievement than a sustained effort. For the only part of my action which is really attributable to me for good or for ill is the will that I put into it, my intention and my endeavour: but no intention and no endeavour, least of all in the spiritual life, can guarantee me the result at which I am aiming.

It remains, however, true that the ideal of sanctity is that God should be entirely supreme in my life: that therefore I may never rest in anything short of that: and that consequently the saint-life is one of constant movement and ceases if it becomes static, because then it means acquiescence in some sort of partition of my life between Him and something else, and this is a tacit revocation of the ideal with which it started. The ground difference between the so-called "average" Christian and the saint is in reality a dissimilarity not of the ideal but of the extension of the ideal. To each the ideal is God before anything else, meaning that everything else is to be sacrificed that opposes Him. But the former means by this that he will sacrifice everything that stands between him and the salvation of his soul, while the latter goes further and will sacrifice everything that stands in the way of his perfection, that is, of his ever-closer union with

God. The former will prefer any evil to mortal sin because by that he will lose God altogether: the other will give himself unending pains to avoid the least offence because he is preoccupied, not with the negative fear of losing God, but with the positive longing for union with Him. For the one God is the *condition* of his happiness, for the other He is the *whole* of his happiness. The one will have nothing that is incompatible with having God but he will keep what he can that is not: to the other everything, even the least thing, is incompatible with having God as he wants to have Him. The one, finally, loves God above all things, but he loves other things too: the other loves God alone.

The difference between the two attitudes is a radical one, and from it spring equally far-reaching differences of principle and of action. For those to whom God is the first indeed of objects for whose sake they are prepared to surrender all else should the demand be made, but yet, until the collision of interests is obvious, are willing to use and enjoy them for their own sakes, are committed on their own premises to a divided (however unequally divided) allegiance: the root of the division being the reference of at least some things, often of their very worship of God, to themselves. However obscurely they may

recognize the fact, if indeed they recognize it at all, it is their own salvation, their own final good, their own fulfilment of His will and their own sense of well-being with Him that are the main motives of their submission to Him. Not that this is bad: on the contrary, it is good: but it is not the best, it is not perfection. There is no obligation to anything more, yet if there is nothing more it may very easily be that there will, in practice, be a good deal less.

The saint, on the other hand, though he is in no wise blind to his own interests in the right service of God and knows that the possession of Him is his only and sufficing good, yet wishes to leave himself entirely out of the question and gets nearer and nearer to the ideal of God for Himself alone. Led at first, as he cannot but be led, by considerations of self-interest, he comes bit by bit to realize that the happiness which he seeks for himself will never be truly his until he sees it as God's only: that the perfection at which he aims will never be attained until he understands that it is really nothing of his own but wholly something of God's and only (but therefore the more truly) his own because of his oneness and harmony with God. He understands, dimly no doubt at the outset, that his service of God and his surrender to Him is imperfect in

proportion as he sees it as something that returns upon himself, and that the glory of God is the all-sufficing and self-sufficient end of all service and surrender. He wants union with God, but that union he sees more and more as a thing wholly contained in God and ever less as something that includes himself as a conscious participant in it. And the more he is aware of this, and the more it is a certain truth to him, the less is he able to give an account of it. For it does not mean a fusion of himself into one with the Godhead, since the "otherness" of God is an essential element of our perception of Him and the basis of our adoration, but rather it means (as far as one *can* say what it means) the fullest possible realization of his own self, since God is the principle of his soul and the author and agent of all his right acts and is therefore in him both the lover and the loved, the seeker and the sought.

So that the practical life of the saint, the extenuation of this self-oblivious search after God, is in point of fact the fullest assertion of himself after all (though that is the last aspect of it that would strike him) because his asceticism and his cultivation of the virtues are nothing but the working out, as it were, in himself of the God-will under whose ceaseless pressure he lives, until

God's very shape moulds his own and informs it and makes it into what from the first it was made to be, his own true self—"To the image of God He created him."

Love, again, even of created things, is never so real and so true as in the saint who loves God alone. For the real and true object of all love is God: the pursuit of the "good" to which we are by our nature bound is in very fact the pursuit of God the Absolute Good from Whom all other things that are apprehended as good derive their denomination as such: so that whether we know it or whether we do not it is God that is the goal of all our desire, even of our unworthy desire. Love, therefore, which is focussed on the creature itself—and in proportion to the degree to which it is so focussed—is imperfect love, even of the creature. But the saint who loves God only, loves Him too in the creatures in which He is mirrored, and therefore loves them the more purely and perfectly, even for themselves. Those words of Christ's, recorded in the Gospel of St Luke, that a man must hate his father and mother and wife and brethren or he cannot be His disciple, must be taken together with the parallel passage of St Matthew, where it is said that if he love them "more than Me he is not worthy of Me": if he love them,

that is, in will, apart from God, for then that is no true love either of them or of God since the whole goodness of creatures on account of which we are to love them is from their participation in the goodness of God for which alone they are lovable. But to those to whom God is not much more than a name, love on such grounds seems (though most falsely) to pass the creature over altogether, to be in fact hate. It is only a perfectly logically sequence of this truth that there will arise occasions on which one may have ruthlessly to disregard even the closest ties of affection and relationship: occasions, namely, when God calls us, as it were, in His own person and not mediately through any of our fellow-creatures. Such will be not only the extraordinary vocations of which the lives of the saints offer so many instances, but also the secret summonses that happen in the daily lives of those to whom God is the one all-significant Reality with which the illusions that waste away so much of our affections must from time to time come into collision. To hate, that is to put aside as irrelevant, everything and anything that seems to hinder our direct way to God, becomes natural and a necessity: it is the beginning of the renunciation which is fulfilled in the "hating," in the same sense, of our own selves. "Yea, and his own

life also," says the same passage of St Luke. "Forget the feeling of the being of thyself," comments the author of *The Cloud*, "for the feeling of the being of God. . . . And therefore, ever when thou beholdest to thy working and seest and feelest that it is thyself that thou feelest and not God, then shalt thou make sorrow earnestly, and heartily long after the feeling of God. . . . For He is thy being, and in Him thou art what thou art, not only by cause and by being, but also He is in thee both thy cause and thy being."

In the saint, therefore, God has His unrestricted way, because the saint is one who says, as *The Cloud* once more has it: "That that I am, Lord, I offer unto Thee, for Thou it art." As far as may be there is nothing in him, saving his identity, that is not God's: not made so only because of his offering of it, but seen by him to be so in very truth and reality.

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“**B**E you therefore perfect as also your Heavenly Father is perfect”: the command comes almost exactly in the middle of a long series of precepts and counsels, beginning with the Beatitudes, all of them certainly pointing to high ideals of conduct, yet none of them exceeding in substance the moral teaching with which His hearers should already have been familiar: and the effect upon the audience, whose minds were no doubt busy, according to their consciences and habits of thought, in fitting what they heard into their own practice or that of their neighbours, may not have been particularly striking. But to us, reading the record at leisure, after so great an interval of time, with the whole code of Christianity before us and (what is more important) with a normal standard of response to it already long established, the words come with something of a shock. Our Lord seems to have dropped them, out of His context, and then to have passed on, leaving them unexplained, as if no explanation should be necessary. Yet they have the effect of setting an impossible pitch of effort, lifting the level of the instruction in whose

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midst they occur to a height which removes it from the sphere of conceivable attainment and introduces into our acceptance of it an uneasiness as of something imperfectly understood yet pledging us to more than even He can have a right to expect of us. We are asked to accept a teaching which we cannot but admit is eminently suited to our nature and its implied obligations, and are then abruptly told that this acceptance involves subscription to an ideal of perfection which we can by no means reconcile with our natures or even with reason.

Once again, as so constantly throughout the whole of His teaching, we have it brought home to us that, gentle and pitiful and understanding and patient though He always was, Christ never ceased to make uncompromising demands of those who would follow Him. As in His own life, when by a little accommodation or complaisance on what may seem to us unessential points He might so easily have avoided the tragedy and apparent failure that ended it, but would do no such thing, so in His followers He makes it very clear that He expects a like inflexibility of adherence to the best and the highest. He did not press the rich young man who, good and eager though he was, could not find it in him to face the bleak prospect of utter

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renunciation to which he was invited, and turned sadly away. He saw him go and did not call him back: but though seeing him go He "became sorrowful," so little did He lower His conditions of discipleship in order to tempt his resolution that those who heard Him, says St Luke, asked fearfully: "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus answered, not explaining anything away or making anything easier, stressing indeed the difficulty but at the same time pointing out the only means of surmounting it, "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God."

He sets us an ideal which though we know it to be an impossible one we yet, paradoxically, cannot deny to be the only worthy one for beings such as we: and He assures us that if we will face it in reliance upon His word Who presents it to us the impossible will come to pass. Herein is the mystery of sanctity, the mystery of the incredible surrender and the perfect faith. Who, we may well ask, are called to be saints, to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect: called, that is, not as every private soldier may be said to be called to be a General, but really and truly and effectively? Christ, it seems, has given no other answer than that *all* are thus called who will answer.

"If thou wilt be perfect . . ."—is it said to

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everyone? "We know," says St Paul, "that to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints." But St Paul here uses the word saints as we should say Christians, Holy Ones as they should be in virtue of their deliverance from the slavery of evil by belief in Christ. To many the grace of enrolment among the Redeemed of Christ, who by the sacrament of Baptism are freed from the yoke of the Old Law, was freely given, "whom He predestinated them also He called: and whom He called, them also He justified." But there were, and there were to be, many who should never receive this gift. Nor can they have any just complaint, for "who shall accuse against the elect of God?" Our concern, anyway, is not with these but with those who have been called in the sense implied by St Paul, among whom are ourselves; and our concern is to know whether therefore we are also called to saintship in the narrower sense which we now give to that term: and if so, how we are to look upon that call as a practical issue of the day.

If, as some seem to think, sanctity in the heroic degree is to be considered as in the same category as genius, then the call must be a very restricted one indeed, and the difficulty is not

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lessened but only shifted elsewhere: for then we have to find some way of interpreting the words of Christ which will narrow them down from a perfectly general invitation to an extremely particular one, and it is not easy to see how this can be done without entirely destroying their significance. The alternative seems to be to suppose that He issued the invitation to all indeed, but that, somehow, only a minute proportion of those who have heard the summons have a right to apply it to themselves. But this, too, is hard to maintain in face of the incontestable fact that many, very many, lay people as well as religious, have had no doubt at all that the invitation did apply to themselves, and have laboured to respond to it, even though in the majority of cases they may have failed to do so.

It is perhaps necessary to point out the distinction between sanctity as formally recognized by the Church in the act of canonization, and sanctity (possibly quite as exalted) to which no such recognition has been accorded. The distinction is, in fact, only a superficial one, though in popular estimation it stands for a specific difference. Canonization may be not unfitly likened to the dignity of knighthood, which while it guarantees (or should guarantee) the worthiness of the recipients, does not imply that they

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alone are worthy : but with this further difference, that canonization is in the first place not for the sake of the saint himself but of the rest of the faithful to whom he is presented as an example, and usually as an example of some special point of Christian life : it is not the cause of his sainthood but simply its official recognition by the Church for a purpose. So that the question is not, of course, whether all Christians are called to canonization, but whether they are all called to sanctity such as would entitle them, did God so direct it, to the special mark of authentication which that implies.

The incident of the rich young man seems to argue that indeed all Christians have this vocation, and reason itself would appear to confirm the deduction. If not, then we are forced to admit that there are some souls which are intended by God to remain incomplete, or at least to which He will not afford the means of completion. To put it in another way : it would mean that God, Who has endowed the human soul with a capacity for embracing an ideal and has so constituted it that nothing less than Himself can ever fully satisfy it, has nevertheless shut off from some (historically the immense majority) of them all hope of ever coming within measurable distance of the ideal : has, indeed, positively

willed that they should not do so. But is it thinkable that He should decree that anything coming from His hands should have imperfection as the end of its existence? And do not the words "If thou *wilt* be perfect" either mean that man can be perfect if he will, or else mean nothing at all?

The answer to the obvious difficulty that arises from the all-too-patent fact that only a microscopic fraction of the world of Christians has actually achieved sanctity should be looked for in the words that follow: "Go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor"—that is, get rid of it beyond redemption. It was the terrifying implications of that counsel, which he fully understood, that staggered the resolution of the young Ruler: the implication, namely, that the first step to the following of Christ must be an utter and final denudation of self: after that he might enter upon the Way. And he did not know then what the Way, the Way of the Cross, was to be that should follow upon that merciless stripping. But *we* know, or at least we know a great deal about it, and small wonder that the path of sanctity, so well called heroic, is a thing that we can scarcely bring our minds to apply to our own selves but prefer to consider as meant for only here and there a soul of genius.

But is it not more likely to be the truth, seeing the nature of the case, that the root of our acceptance of mediocrity as the normal lot of man, and the explanation of the fact that so it has in practice proved to be, is really in the last resort *fear*? It is not a very far cry from the fear of doing a thing to the persuasion that we *cannot* do it: the sequence is, indeed, a psychological commonplace. And what is true of the individual is true of the mass: it has become a *mass obsession*, so to speak, that sanctity is practically impossible for the average man, and therefore was never intended for more than a handful of abnormal spirits, and it will be but rarely that the individual asks himself *as* an individual whether it may be possible for him. But the saints did ask themselves this question, and they found that it was possible: others there were, and are and always will be, to whom the same question has occurred, and amongst these there are many who have answered as the saints did, but in their resolution to act upon the answer there has been a thread of incredulity—of fear, in short—which has destroyed it almost at birth. Fear, not perhaps consciously recognized as such: rather an acquired incapacity for facing, or for believing that one could face, the helpless self-committal to another (even though that other

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be God) which sanctity supposes and demands. We know what we would have to do to set out upon the Way, we know that we could do it, and we want to do it, but we never do it because there is just one little (but stupendous) thing that we must do first, and that we cannot bring ourselves to do. We stand with our backs to a closed but not locked door: all we have to do is to turn round and push it open: there is nothing to hinder us and we know it, but we never turn round because, again, there is that little thing to do first—little, because it is hardly more than a “click” of the will—which is the free surrender of our whole self, nothing held back. It is an act which, though done in an instant, is final in its effect, like the last thrust of a diver’s muscles against the balance of gravity.

If I stood on the brink of a precipice, and a friend to whom in daily life I would trust myself with absolute confidence were to call up to me from below to throw myself over, and were to assure me on our sacred and long-tested friendship that no harm would come to me, he would guarantee it: and I were to peer fearfully over and see no means provided for breaking my fall but just the savage rocks far beneath and my friend looking up at me, should I dare to risk the leap: *could* I? Granted a condition of spiritual

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sensitiveness (which should indeed be normal and can be wanting only through some perversity of circumstance) the soul of the average Christian to whom God is a reality is at its times subjected to just such crises, to just such summonses to a like terrible folly of self-commitment to the bare word of a Friend. To respond to the summons is to enter straight into the mystic life of the saints: but to respond seems to us plainly an impossibility, and our natural refuge from the necessity of choice is the long ingrained conviction that it is not for us to make. But upon what grounds we rest that conviction it is difficult to understand. Better far to recognize frankly that the only possible ground is fear, and that we simply cannot face the leap because we simply dare not.

It has been said that the life of sanctity is the greatest of all miracles. Let that be true: still Christ has promised that if we have faith "and stagger not" there is no miracle that will be too great for our accomplishment, and that "all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

Perhaps therein lies the real reason why this fear has established so paralysing a spell upon us: we have not sufficiently combated it with the counter-spell of "prayer believing." For just as the real reason why I do not keep a difficult

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resolution is because I do not believe that I shall, so the real reason why my prayer for the grace of sanctity does not avail me is because I cannot believe that it will. History, heredity, personal experience, all combine to rivet my prejudice upon me. Under their influence I gradually outdistance the disturbing echo of His words, spoken without reservation to me as to everyone else who should believe in Him, until at last it happens that I hear it no more.

EPIPHANY

THE visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem appeals to the imagination more than does any other incident in the Gospel story. After the stupendous humiliation of the Nativity in a deserted wayside stable and the paradoxical insistence of the angels upon the manger and the swaddling clothes as the *sign*, not the veil, of Messiahship and Divinity, there comes into the picture what at first sight seems unbearably incongruous, an incident of royal homage, with gold and incense and precious spices and all the accompaniments of the Court, just as if it were the most natural thing in the world. One wonders what were the feelings of the villagers as the solemn cortège paced through the streets, and more especially what Mary and Joseph thought as these grave strangers bent before them and laid their tributes of worship at the feet of the Child. To the supernaturally enlightened mind of the Mother there could indeed be nothing surprising in this adoration of her Son whom she had, as the second Nocturn of the Christmas Office reminds us, "conceived in her mind before she conceived Him in her body." But even

she may well have pondered over the import of this intrusion into the humble circumstances of their life of the forms and ceremonies of earthly glory. Joseph, the just man, so well accustomed to accept faithfully and simply the guidance of God in all that concerned the Child committed to his care, will no doubt have accepted this too as belonging somehow to the dispensation of which he had become a part: and the villagers will have wondered and chattered and questioned and been jealous or flattered as their characters inclined them, and then have forgotten. But for us, for whom the Gospel story is always in the telling and is always a thing of the present, the Epiphany of the Lord remains full of mystery, baffling and intriguing. The mystery of the Star, the mystery of the strangers themselves, the mystery of their contentment with the little son of a village artisan when they had come a journey of many months to find a king, the mystery of their disappearance unnamed and untraced into the obscurity from which they had come, the mystery of their place in the sober narrative of the Gospel, mixing strangely their purple and gold and gems and perfumes in the homely lives and speech of shepherds and countryfolk.

We know at least that the Wise Men were not Jews: we do not know what they expected from

the leading of the Star, but we may feel quite sure that it was not what the Jews would have expected. Most likely what they did expect would not at all have harmonized with the revealed truth as it was known to the Chosen People, for they came of a nation "sitting in darkness," a breed without the Law: and judged by the standard of the Law their expectations would have been condemned as false and idolatrous. But what they did want, even if it was all wrong in itself, they wanted sincerely and intensely. To them, however shrouded in false imagery, it represented the truth, and as such they followed it with all the resources in their power, in absolute single-mindedness and with unquestioning faith. An ideal had arisen before them: how it had arisen or from what source does not matter: nor does it matter that the ideal may have been in itself altogether mistaken. To them it was a pure ideal which solicited all their devotion and stood for all that they knew of what was highest and best: therefore they left everything and came a weary long journey out of their far-off country to find among strangers what they felt that at all costs they must have. The Star, as we know, led them to the very last thing that they could have ever expected as the goal of their pilgrimage: to what by all seeming

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must have been at the very farthest pole from their imagined end. It was over an artisan's cottage that it stood still, not over a palace: and going in they found not a king but a child. Well, it must be right, that was where the Star had led them: no doubt they did not understand, but then they did not want to understand: it was sufficient that they had followed the light that led them, and, with all the reverence that they would have paid to the crowned king whom they expected to find, they went in and adored and gave thanks and came away. That was the whole of the adventure. A king had been born: a Star had led them to Him: He was not such a king as they could ever have imagined: but since the Star had led them to Him, a king He was, and their quest was ended and their souls were filled. They suffered no disillusionment for they had had no illusion: they were not seeking for anything of their own imagining but for something that had been given to them: and if because of their upbringing they had formed to themselves a false picture of that revelation, they were perfectly ready to take the truth for the truth when they saw it.

The great light that they had seen was a true light, but of necessity they had seen it after their own manner, and what they had seen was there-

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fore not true, and what it led them to was, in consequence, to them a disappointment, though just because they had in utter sincerity followed the light that they had, the disappointment was in reality fulfilment. And because of their sincerity, and because under all their mistaken pre-possession they had wanted nothing but the truth, they recognized it, strange and bewildering as it was, when they found it.

The story of the pilgrimage of the Wise Men is a parable of our own. The Star that by all our reckoning should have led us to Jerusalem—*beata pacis Visio*—leads us to an unknown village: it should have taken us into the visible presence of God, it leaves us with God more hidden from us than ever: we bring all that we have of most costly to the sacrifice, and it seems that there is no one to receive it or to value it. It is only when at last we come to this, that we want God, and the things of God, not for ourselves at all but for Him alone, that we begin to suspect the falsity of our own values and to get some comprehension of His. We learn then that in the conflict of His standard and our own, loss may be gain, and frustration fulfilment, and death life: that a cottage may be a palace, and a humble little child a king. The highest ideal that we can see may well be all wrong as we see it, but still we must follow after

it and be prepared to find that it leads us to nothing, which is yet everything. "We looked for light, and behold darkness: for brightness, and we have walked in the dark," because our own light is darkness and the darkness of God is light.

The prayer, "Lord, that I may see!" is not a petition that I may have a clear vision of things as they really are (which, indeed, might be of no service at all to me) but a demand for grace to commit myself blindly to the darkness of faith. I mean more justly, "Lord, that I may *believe!*" and I add, "Help thou my unbelief," because nature is stubborn and old habits die very hard.

The Wise Men looked for a king and they found a little child. They were content, not because they knew that the Child was the Christ, but just because, whether they knew it or not, He *was* the Christ. No other child, whatever they might have thought of him, could have contented them. But because He *was* the King, and because for all their wrong notions of kingship it was no other than Christ the King that in their hearts they unknowingly sought, therefore they knew, without knowing, that they had found Him.

So for all of us the test of the genuineness and

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truth of our quest is that when it comes to an end, however unlike it be to our expectation of it, we know that we have found what we were seeking. By whatever road we travel, if we walk always by the light that is given us, like the Wise Men, to Christ in the end we shall come, for all the noblest aspirations of the human heart find their satisfaction in Him and find it nowhere else. He may be as little known to us, when we start, as He was to the Wise Men, and as little recognizable when we find Him. But if our search is as honest and as selfless and as humble as theirs, to Him we shall be surely led and Him only shall we adore. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

MAGNIFICAT

THERE is very little, almost nothing, recorded of Our Lady in the Gospels on which those who are attracted mainly by the visible signs of majesty and virtue (and that is nine-tenths of mankind) can rest their tribute of praise. They are thrown back, therefore, upon their own imaginations to supply the deficiency, and knowing what she was by her office, and how much she was to God, they construct a congenial imagery for this and clothe her with the splendour and pomp which seem to them best to represent it. And the result is, of course, that her personality eludes every flight of their fancy: for she is not only greater than anything that they can say of her, but greater in such a different way that the more they say of her the less they make her. She was not, indeed, ignorant of her own sanctity nor of the signal gifts with which God had endowed her, but she knew that what He regarded in her was her humility, her littleness, her ungreatness in such a sense.

He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid— hath regarded, that is, the small esteem in which, except as instruments given to her for service, she

held the unique gifts and privileges for which we praise her. For humility is not blindness, whether deliberate or unconscious, and humility does not come by comparing ourselves with others of our own kind. It is a clear-eyed vision of oneself as one knows oneself to be, stressing neither the good nor the evil, seeing as clearly that in which one is above as that in which one is below others, but measuring oneself then not at all by such finite contingent differences as these but wholly by the infinite difference of God's uncreated perfection. Mary looked up, not down: and in that comparison with Him from Whom she had all that she was, her eminence over the rest of His creatures seemed to her to vanish.

Her greatness, indeed, is not in anything that she had but in the one thing that she was. Her littleness was the biggest thing about her: for pride is one thing with narrowness, as humility with true breadth of soul. It is those, as has been well said, whose experience is limited to their own homes, their own country, their own personal interests, who are the readiest victims to the temptation to self-esteem: travel, and the mixing with others who live in a more spacious world, produce in one by comparison, and quite apart from any spiritual influence, a chastening diminution of one's own importance

which corrects the self-centred perspective that has distorted one's outlook.

How much more then, in the supernatural order, does the contact of the soul with God, broadening its horizon far beyond all creation and setting it beside His unlimited power and perfection, force it back among the very lowest with whom there is no further comparison possible save as between nothing and nothing?

He hath put down the mighty from their seat: we have to relinquish even the best-grounded estimate of our superiority over others when we stand before that Presence, because all that we have and are, by which we reckon the fancied distance between them and ourselves, dwindles to an indivisible point when compared with the awful reality of the distance between ourselves and Him.

But, *He hath exalted the humble*: the very cause of our humiliation is also the agent of our exaltation: that which is the destruction of our belief in ourselves is the material of our true knowledge of ourselves. For conjugate with the piercing vision of our nothingness before God is the recognition of our utter dependence upon Him, and from this (knowing ourselves now, and Him too) grows confidence, and from confidence love. We are humbled, but not depressed: made aware

of our impotence, but not paralysed by it. For the same revelation that has taken away from us our strength, upon which we had falsely relied, has given us God's strength instead which cannot fail us—*I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.*

Mary, the first-fruits of the Redemption, who by her special and sublime privileges was from the beginning the closest of all creatures to God, was on that very account—not in spite of, but because of, her true greatness—the lowliest too, and the humblest of all creatures.

She says that all generations shall call her blessed: but she says why. Because He who is mighty has done great things to her: in her person He has confounded the proud and dethroned the powerful and sent the rich empty away: and He has raised up the humble and filled the empty (those who know themselves for what they are) with all good things.

A NEW COMMANDMENT

AMONG the saints who make up the vast catalogue of the Martyrology there are almost as many varieties as there are individuals, who indeed can be classified only very roughly into groups, for they appear to differ endlessly among themselves, some even to stand in contrast (one might almost say in opposition) to one another in their vocation, their character, their very principles and fundamental ideals. Century, education, intellect, country, class, and a score of other differentiating factors separate them no doubt into certain well-defined categories: but inside these there are further narrower distinctions which leave them in the end every one with their own particular and incommunicable identity. Yet under all these multiple differences they stand, singly and collectively, for the same thing: they are all the expression, in varying mediums, of the one supreme and exhaustive ideal of holiness, the Christ-life. Singly, in virtue of their mystical oneness with Christ, they are alive only in so far as they live His life, and that is the measure of their holiness. Collectively, as with all the Church they form His mystical body,

so also as one body do they lead His life and as one body share in His sanctity. So that the lives of the saints are a detailed unfolding and commentary on the life of Christ, expounding it from this or that angle and in this or that set of circumstances, not by oral teaching alone, or even chiefly, but as a thing actually lived and to be lived. The true imitation of the saints, therefore, does not consist in copying their individualities, but in seeing the Christ in them in order that we may learn to find Him and give Him place in ourselves. Hence, devotion to this or that particular saint should be founded on our recognizing in his mode of apprehending Christ a similarity to our own.

Amidst these varied interpretations of the one fact we should expect to find a well-defined thread of continuity, a common feature, referring them to their fundamental identity. Since they all mean the same thing we ought to be able to *see* that they do. It is not sufficient that we recognize that of course the saints—our title for the perfect Christian—must be perfect followers of Christ: we ought to be able to satisfy ourselves experimentally, as it were, that indeed they are. So the question arises whether there is some mark, some unequivocal note, by which this can be certified: whether among the diversity of

virtues, or rather the diversity of emphasis among the virtues, there is a central one which emerges notably from the rest in every individual, and whether this is a virtue specially expressive of the ideal represented by the Christ-life.

The answer is not far to seek. Charity at once presents itself as the virtue which of all others distinguished that Life and gave it its unique character and appeal. Charity (or, to give it its proper translation, Love) with all its forms and derivatives, pity, gentleness, patience, sympathy, largeness of mind, loyalty, mercy, service, self-sacrifice, are the colours of His portrait, the very fabric of His life. "God is Love," says St John: and the Word of God, His utterance, His thought, Christ, whom to see (as He Himself said) is to see God, taught love and lived it and died for it. Whatever else He was—and St Paul reminds us that in Him "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"—first and foremost He stands out in the Gospel as the Spirit of Charity incarnate.

His teaching is that love of one another is love of God, and binds us with the same solemnity. In the Our Father—less a single vocal prayer than a scheme and summary of all prayer—we are made to profess that we ask and expect from God the same measure of forgiveness for our

offences against Him that we extend to those who offend against ourselves. He will not accept the offering that we make Him if in our heart there is any bitterness or anger with our brother. The Judgment is made to look as if it depended wholly upon the quality of our charity to all our brethren, none excepted. And all through the Four Gospels He preaches by word and deed, again and again, the unique importance, the supreme necessity, of charity, and charity of a very high degree. Everything is made subordinate to it, everything is included in it, nothing will do instead of it. "He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth," says St John, "how can he love God Whom he seeth not?" The question is unanswerable: the one is impossible without the other because they are the same thing. The acid test of holiness, which is the love of God, is charity, which is the love of God. Charity which means the effort to maintain in every thought and word and deed affecting others a high standard of kindness, not of sentimental softness nor of benevolent indifference nor of merely negative abstention from harshness or cruelty, but of positive kindness, deliberate and universal.

No lofty reasonings about God and about His relations to us and ours to Him will do away with the obstinate fact that if we love Him

really, and not in our reveries alone, we must love our neighbour too, really, and not in theory only. It is no use at all to see (as who can fail to see?) that He is in all things and persons and consequently is to be found and loved in them and they in Him, unless our belief flows over into action and in the practical affairs of daily life we do thus see Him and them too and do act upon what we see. Few things are more disconcerting than the often-recurring phenomenon of high ideals and fine and subtle speculations upon the nature of God and of the spiritual life—much devotion too, and even austerity—in combination with an almost total insensibility to the duty of charity to others. In such persons one is sometimes bewildered to find a sort of contempt for this realized charity, as if it were an inferior, elementary, unintelligent kind of thing. Or perhaps, by a remarkable obliquity of judgment, they will consider that their superior perceptions somehow absolve them from deference to this Commandment, or at least from anything so coarse as putting it into vulgar practice. But though one may be a competent art critic without having ever handled a brush or a chisel, and may legitimately pass judgment upon a book which one could not have written oneself, in the life of the soul there are no such

privileges: knowledge there is no knowledge at all unless it is also and equally action, and if it is not that, then it is worse than ignorance.

Who has not known persons in whom there seems to be nothing lacking of the statutory marks of Christian perfection, constant frequenters of the Sacraments, active in good works, students of spiritual literature, following perhaps an exacting rule of life and obedient to a director, who yet, given the occasion, have shown themselves capable of unbelievable contempt and resentment and hardness towards others? Who take offence and will not forgive, who are eagerly ready to condemn and seem to be incapable of making allowances or of forming a kindly judgment when they meet with uncongenial neighbours? What is the worth of the "perfection" (which should be the Christliness) of such as these? It is an illusion: it has hardly the substance of a wreath of mist, thin, formless, perishing.

There is no saint, it would be a contradiction in terms if there were, who was not before everything remarkable for charity in mind and in action no matter what other virtues have seemed to shine more eminently in his life. And what is true of the saints, the heroes of the Christian life, should be true too of all Christians who, in the words of St Paul, are "called to be saints."

A NEW COMMANDMENT

The whole Law of Christ is contained in this, and it is a practical truth to say that this is all that there is: for where there is Charity there will be everything else, but where there is not there will be nothing.

THE PAST

THE Past is written and cannot be erased. I can easily conjure up phantoms of the Future, but I can as easily lay them again: the phantoms of the Past, as easily summoned, I cannot lay, for they have a reality of their own while the others have none but such as I choose to give them and may take away from them. A well-known writer has remarked that for each of us the measure of the reality of a thing is the degree of its resistance to our will. An accomplished fact has passed beyond the reach of my will, it has an independent being of its own, it is permanent: it is a reality which cannot be affected by anything that I may do or desire. But on the other hand, and for that very reason, it can and does affect my will: it acts upon it sympathetically or adversely according as it is or is not in harmony with what that will now is. It is therefore ever present to me though it is past in itself, for to act upon a thing is to be present to it. In the beginning it was a creature of my will, it is now a competitor with it.

The seriousness of this reflection in its bearing upon our moral and spiritual life is obvious. Our

moral and spiritual life is shaped by the nature of the choices which so long as we live we must constantly be making. To every one of our deliberate actions there is a host of alternatives, any one of which we may choose instead of the one which in fact we do choose. Our final choice, if it be deliberate, is the outcome of a preference upon which all similar choices are threaded, and the cumulative effect of these choices is to influence more and more efficaciously the direction of all subsequent ones. This influence may be greater or less according to the importance of the subject of election and the degree of its deliberation, but influence there is and must be: and how much more natural it is to follow along a ready-made pathway, however faintly traced, than to break out a fresh one. So, for the most part, we take the line of least resistance, and to-day lays down the reckoning of to-morrow. The growth of habit may be almost immeasurably slow and fragile, like the work of the coral insect—upon which, however, whole archipelagos have been founded.

Isolated acts are not a sure basis of judgment, for such acts may be the product of surprise or of exceptional pressure. Hence it is that first impressions of a stranger are so rarely just. It is when on a closer acquaintance one is able to

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detect the thread of continuity in his conduct that one may venture to pronounce a classifying verdict upon him, and this will be favourable or the reverse in the measure that the general trend of his actions be apprehended as good or bad. For one is what one makes oneself, and one makes oneself in the moral and spiritual sphere by one's free acts of will, building with "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble."

How much more then, in God's eyes, from Whom none of my motives and secret sub-motives are hidden, do I appear truly as I am: in God's eyes, to Whom nothing is trivial or obscure in the minute play and interplay of thought and memory and desire. He alone sees and understands how much in my volitional life I move towards Him or away from Him, and how the sum-total of my hourly choices *is* my final choice itself. For the instrument which is in my hands at the end is such as I have fashioned it all my life through: it has taken the form and temper that I, with each of my countless free elections, have given it, and such as they are such is now its efficiency. I have come therefore to the final assay with my faculty of response to it already determined, and that by my own past action for which no one is responsible but myself. The use that I have made of my will during my life

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defines the use that I shall make of it now; what I am now is the average of what I have been up till now.

This is not a gospel of determinism, nor does it forget the solvent action of repentance and forgiveness. From my sin and its eternal consequences God's mercy will deliver me if it were at the last instant of my life. But short of utter ruin, how many degrees are there not of failure and default. And who can tell through what mysteries of agonized reparation we may have to pass in Purgatory after death, taking to pieces limb by limb, fibre by fibre, all the mis-willed structure that we have built, and rebuilding it, slowly and with what unimaginable pain, because of the enduring error of our Past.

D I E S I R Æ

THE Judgment after death, the thought of which is often so terrifying, intruding harshly as it does between us and our thoughts of God's fatherhood and love, and thrusting us back into awful isolation before an unimaginable Being of inflexible justice and absolute rectitude, may easily be so misunderstood as to produce an unfavourable reaction upon the whole of one's spiritual outlook. For how can mortal man support the terrible inquisition of that all-seeing gaze, far less pass the test of His measure in Whose sight the very heavens are not pure? Will not my soul, stripped of all its protective illusion and pretence, shrivel and be annihilated under that ordeal, impossible to be borne, surely, by anything less than perfection? The past, the irrevocable past, will rise up renewed before me: the evil that I have done, and have forgotten or hidden rather than repented: the sins into which, for all my repentance, I should fall again were I tempted again: those other sins which I have taken lightly because they never came to fruition, though it was not the will but the opportunity that failed me: and all that knotted web of

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wrong desire and mean intention and cowardice and untruth and pride and scorn and selfishness, how will it look when the last hour has struck and I see it as I never could have seen it before, unravelled, and revealing to my horrified eyes all the implications that it contained for my own hurt and for the hurt, perhaps, of the whole world? For the Judgment will consist essentially in this, that in the moment when my soul passes from my body, out of the image and the shadow into the truth, I shall see myself as God sees me, and in that sight shall be compelled to recognize and accept the verdict which I, seeing as He does, must pass upon it equally with Him.

I can hardly bear to think now that from the first moment in which I was capable of responsible action down to the latest, not one deed or word or fleeting thought or desire that was mine but will stand out precisely as in absolute truth it was, neither greater nor less, better nor worse. And, more serious still, that I shall see how each evil act was in its very nature a germinating thing, a seed with endless potency of reproduction: and how terribly often, in fact, my wilful surrenders to wrong have been the starting points of a multiplying series of more wrong and more defacement and corruption not

to myself alone but to many others too, whose sin I shall thus find added to my own.

If even now I have my moments of panic in which I can see nothing good or pure or honest in the best of my actions, nor give any trust to my intentions nor belief to my beliefs, how will it be then when the merciful dimness which now obscures my conscious acts from me almost as soon as they are done, will have lifted, and there will be nothing between me and the stark reality of things as they eternally are?

There can be nothing to do then, no other hope, than to beg for mercy. Yet why should there be any mercy shown me, since nothing will be imputed to me but what I cannot disown: and how can God show me mercy if mercy means (as we cannot help imagining that it does) a palliation or passing over of the truth? No, such a prayer would not reach our lips: indeed, since the record alleged against us will not be something extrinsic, as it were, but a coherent whole woven with intent into our intimate lives, a thing identified with us from which we cannot disengage ourselves, not a staccato series of isolated acts but a final free choice constituted out of the innumerable free choices of all our life through, it will be too late, it will be out of our power, to rescind it. I am

not judged by this or that act, however many there be or however bad they be, but by what the sum of these acts imports in my final attitude towards God: not by what my acts are in themselves, but by what they have made of me. It is only by a quite illegitimate confusion of thought that one pictures the soul at the Judgment Seat confronted for the first time with the *liber scriptus* of its life, horrified at the revelations therein contained, and eager to disavow them. For indeed it is more accurate to call that dread day the day rather of Verdict than of Judgment: judgment has already been passed (and by our very selves too) in the deliberate choice for good or for ill that made each act our own, and if we have culpably allowed the time of repentance to pass, by that judgment we stand; it is a thing accepted and approved upon which we do not go back. If, to speak metaphorically, I shall stand aghast and terrified and cowering at that tremendous Assize, it will not be with contrition, of which I shall be no longer capable, but with the horror and misery and despair that are born of unrelieved evil, of that sin which "when it is completed begetteth death." Indeed, I reaffirm my dreadful choice, but the choice has now no illusion of good about it such as, in accordance with my nature, clenched my election while yet

I was free: it is a choice wholly bad and horrible, "I have said to rottenness, thou art my father: to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." The supplications for mercy in the *Dies Iræ* are anticipatory: we are meant to figure the Judgment to ourselves in advance, to cast our eyes backwards over a past that might be, that *will* be but for the grace and the prevenient mercy for which we pray.

But the question is whether, natural and almost inevitable though it be, that instinct is sound which looks upon the Judgment Day as wholly, or even mainly, *dies iræ calamitatis et miseræ*. Is it altogether wholesome that we should have as a principal conception of God's relation to us that of a Judge concerned chiefly with vindictive justice, with the detection and punishment of guilt? Certainly there are many very stern passages of Scripture wherein He appears to be depicted as the Avenger, to the exclusion of any other function, of the sins of mankind. And we do not forget that even in the New Testament the Epistle to the Hebrews says that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." But then is it not quite clear (and who that has tried to form to themselves any sort of idea of sin would contest it) that given grave and deliberate sin, and given obduracy in face of the

copious opportunities of repentance, there is no alternative for the soul but complete and final disaster? That, properly speaking, eternal loss is not so much the punishment of sin as sin itself, unretracted and complete: that as the fulfilment of the soul in God is the everlasting reward of them that serve Him faithfully, so as complete a frustration of the soul is the inevitable consequence (indeed, the simple logical statement) of rebellion against Him? So that, as we should look at it, it is true to say that here God cannot help Himself.

Small wonder that we whose civil polity is, after all, built, or at least supported, less upon permissive than upon prohibitive legislation, and who are more accustomed to legal process for the punishment of evildoing than for the justification of right conduct, should see in the doctrine of the Judgment little, if indeed anything, but a prospect of fear and dismay which we hardly dare to face.

But plainly this must be wrong: it cannot be right that behind the image of a God Who has made us for Himself, Who loves us "with an everlasting love," as our own hearts no less unmistakably than the Scriptures assure us, we should have an uneasy consciousness of such a dread reality as this. It is impossible that under

what would then be only an expedient illusion of love and care and patience and forgiveness, fear (and especially fear of an uncalculable reckoning in the future) should be the ordained relation between God and ourselves.

Once again, as always, we must turn in our perplexity to Him who alone has the words of eternal life, Whom to see is to see the Father, since His whole life was a translation of Him into terms that we can understand. Indeed the *Dies Iræ* itself devotes more than half its lines to an appeal to Christ, by His life and promises, to save us from the stupor and the gloom of the terrible day and to lead us safely through its darkness. And so He will: and in the Light of that Life we shall see the Way.

For surely it needs no very detailed study of the life of Christ for us to understand from it that before all else God became man in order to seek and to save: that for that end there was no price that He was not ready to pay, and *did* pay—"Greater love hath no man": that He is concerned in the first place, not with the punishment of the sinner but with his conversion, indeed that the return of the rebel is mysteriously more to him than the loyalty that never wavered: that not up to the very last extremity will He of His own motion surrender the wrongdoer to

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his chosen end, even though it be a Judas or a Caiaphas or His own executioners: and that it was by no accident that the last that was seen of Him alive upon earth was as set in a wide gesture of invitation with arms stretched out, and nailed out, to be remembered like that for ever.

There follows, therefore, one possible conclusion only: that God does not judge me that He may punish but that He may reward me: that He is not looking for the evil in me but for the good: and that if it terrifies me to think that in that hour I shall find myself to be so much worse than ever I thought, it should comfort me by a far better title to think instead how much better, perhaps, I shall find myself to have been than ever I had dared to imagine. For I shall see myself then as God sees me—that is, I shall look at myself in the manner that God looks at me, in a light enkindled of His love of me which will throw first into the foreground all that love desires to see in me, my good, His good, Himself.

I shall make far less mistake about it and run far less risk of affecting the true balance of my vision of the Judge if I think of Him as delving, so to say, into my life in eager search of whatever He can commend and reward, be it ever so little gold among a very great deal of dross. He will

judge me by the best that is in me: that will be my "index." The best ideal and the sincerest effort, so long as they were really mine, and even if to my seeing they produced very little, will be what will identify me in His sight.

After all, in spite of the common prepossession to the contrary, the best side of a person reveals his truest self, and it is not so much cynicism as false judgment that makes us focus our view of another, as we so normally do, by the evil that we know of him. We make a far juster estimate of a man's worth from the good that we see in him than from the faults, even the habitual faults, of which we find him to be guilty: indeed it is for this reason that charity (like any other supernatural virtue) reduces in the last resort to truth.

God's judgment of me, therefore, will be the truth about me: and the measure of the truth about me will be the measure of the good that is found in me: and not until the Judgment, when I shall know "even as I am known," shall I know what that is. But in the meantime I have warrant for it that I shall know my Judge the better the more I think of Him as my Advocate.

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